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VOL IV.

HERRMANN'S COMMUNION WITH GOD.

THE COMMUNION OF THE CHRISTIAN WITH GOD:

A DISCUSSION IN AGREEMENT WITH THE VIEW OF LUTHER,

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE SECOND THOROUGHLY REVISED EDITION, WITH SPECIAL ANNOTATIONS BY THE AUTHOR,

BY

J. SANDYS STANYON, M.A.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The theme fundamental.

In the present work I have brought to a special discussion that theme which underlies every doctrinal discussion of any value in our church. It has been my desire to help forward the dogmatic controversies of recent years by bringing to light the religious antithesis which influences their course. We need a clearer understanding of that which influences us all most deeply, namely, our own communion with God. I am convinced that when this has been reached there will gradually come about a different grouping of those who are now engaged in the battles of our theology and church.

Need of the discussion for Christian Praxis.

Our ecclesiastical divisions do not rise as a rule from differences as to particular doctrines, nor are we so divided theologically that all mutual understanding is precluded. It does not follow, of course, that doctrinal position is a matter of indifference and that honest piety alone is to be taken into account. For the Christian faith does not live apart from thoughts which are communicable and to which Christian doctrines seek to give exact expression, nor is any Christian the product of honest piety alone. On the contrary, much depends upon the fashion of our piety; in other words, upon our conception of communion with God and the way we seek it. What we can permanently assert as doctrine depends upon this feature of our inner life. Hence it is a matter of pressing necessity that we should

agree as to that exercise of piety which is justifiable in the Protestant church. I am not ignorant, of course, that such an agreement would fix the limits of that which the church can permit far more firmly than any doctrinal system can fix them. But I hold precisely this fact to be an advantage. A decision must be come to, and we shall have to say whether modern pietism, in conjunction with liberal churchmanship, is to be permitted to impose upon us an ideal of piety which grew up in the Roman Catholic church and which was replaced through Luther by a better.

Luther's views to be understood.

In order to bring this decision nearer, I have sought to set forth and to justify that communion with God which Luther reached through his understanding of Jesus Christ. In this task the well-known works of Th. Harnack and J. Köstlin could not guide me, for, because of their wider range, they could not set forth the fundamental religious ideas of Luther, which are here dealt with, with that fulness which my purpose required.

Editions Luther.

The quotations from the works of Luther have been made from the Erlangen collection, and, as far as Vol. 20, II., of the German writings, from the second edition.

W. HERRMANN.

MARBURG, *June* 25, 1886.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

This edition is some eighty pages longer than the first, although much has been struck out which previously appeared. I hope that the care with which I have revised my work will show my gratitude for the sympathetic reception with which the former issue met. I am especially grateful for the ample criticisms of Kaftan, Lipsius, Luthardt and Oehninger, and also for the shorter notes of Häring and A. Baur.

Many complaints have been made of the keenness of my polemic in the first edition. I have endeavoured to remove the cause of complaint, and have taken especial care to erase an unwarrantable remark I regret to have made against Kähler. I had taken some sharp words of Kähler to refer to Ritschl. I now know that they had quite another intention. I had also spoken of a dependence of Kähler upon Ritschl, while Kähler may justly claim that where he coincides with Ritschl, he stands upon his own feet.

I remark further that in this edition the 24th volume also of the second Erlangen Edition of Luther's German writings has been used.

W. HERRMANN.

MARBURG, *April* 7, 1892.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The following translation is an attempt to place before English readers the work of one of the most distinguished living theologians of Germany; and the translator has felt honoured in being allowed thus to acknowledge the deep debt of gratitude which he owes to the author. The aim has been to give a readable translation of the author's thoughts rather than to render the German into English word for word. It has been thought desirable also, for the convenience of English readers, to break up the long chapters of the German work into shorter ones, and these again into paragraphs. For help in this task, as well as for the careful revision of the whole of his work the translator is greatly indebted to friends who desire that their names should not be mentioned, but to whom are due any merits of clearness which the translation may possess.

It remains only to be added that the translation was made from a special copy of the second edition, with further revisions and alterations from the author's own hand.

J. S. STANYON.

LEICESTER, *October* 4th, 1895.

CONTENTS.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION - - - - v.
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION - - - - vii.
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE - - - - - - viii.

INTRODUCTION.

PAGE.

CHAPTER I.—*The Present Theological Position.*

SECTION 1. Ritschl's appearance - - - - - - 3
,, 2. The opposition divided - - - - - 3
,, 3. Ritschl's influence and that of other teachers - 3
,, 4. Is there a Ritschlian school? - - - - 4
,, 5. The real question of theology - - - - 4
,, 6. Ritschl's method - - - - - - 5

CHAPTER II.—*The Common Life and Warfare.*

SECTION 1. There is a bond in our common need - - 5
,, 2. The want met by the Gospel - - - - 6
,, 3. Life needs light - - - - - - - 6
,, 4. Common personal Christianity - - - - 6
,, 5. Life real, while the theory of it may be wrong - 7
,, 6. This life must be set forth - - - - - 7

CHAPTER III.—*Freedom of Life, and Need for Theological Statement.*

SECTION 1. Doctrine must be various - - - - - 8
,, 2. Preaching and doctrine - - - - - 8
,, 3. The New Testament and the rise of dogma - 8

CHAPTER IV.—*Of Doctrinal Unity.*

SECTION 1. Its value not in mere average ideas - - - 9
,, 2. The real bond of unity - - - - - 10
,, 3. What is personal Christianity? - - - - 10
,, 4. The Christian's real and indispensable use of the New Testament - - - - - - 11

CHAPTER V.—*Of Unity of Life.* PAGE.

SECTION 1. Our study will lead to unity - - - - 11
,, 2. The variety of doctrine will be a blessing - - 11
,, 3. The true confession of faith - - - - 12
,, 4. Faith needs an object - - - - - - 12
,, 5. The right course to pursue - - - - - 13

BOOK I.—CHRISTIANITY *versus* MYSTICISM.

CHAPTER I.—*Religion as conceived by the Mystics.*

SECTION 1. The essential experience of all religion - - 17
,, 2. Roman Catholic mysticism not Christian - - 18
,, 3. The various forms of Roman Catholic Christianity 19
,, 4. The essence of mysticism - - - - - 19
,, 5. Mysticism must be independent of historical reality - - - - - - - - - 20
,, 6. Mysticism and the doctrine of the church - - 20
,, 7. The tendency towards mysticism among Protestants - - - - - - - - 21
,, 8. The merits of mediæval mysticism - - - - 23
,, 9. The God of mysticism not one with Christ - 24
,, 10. Mysticism does not find God - - - - 25
,, 11. Roman Catholicism and Christ - - - - 26
,, 12. God in Christ - - - - - - - - 26

CHAPTER II.—*Mysticism and Christian Theology.*

SECTION 1. Mysticism not Christian - - - - - - 28
,, 2. Does not the Church's dogma exalt Christ and the Trinity? - - - - - - - - 29
,, 3. Mysticism and Church dogma are altogether unsatisfactory - - - - - - 30
,, 4. The historical standpoint alone stands all tests 31
,, 5. The need for a clearer understanding of the Christian's relation to God - - - - 31
,, 6. What are revelation and doctrines of faith? - 32
,, 7. Scholasticism and mysticism - - - - 32
,, 8. The evils of systems of theology - - - 33
,, 9. The mistaken method of the elder Protestant theology - - - - - - - - 34
,, 10. Its result - - - - - - - - - 34
,, 11. The value and joy of the Holy Scriptures - - 35

CHAPTER III.—*Our Difficulties.*

		PAGE.
SECTION 1.	Does our method lead after all to mysticism?	37
,, 2.	The objective reality which must be studied	38
,, 3.	Is our method likely to be purely subjective?	38
,, 4.	Points of agreement with the elder theology	39
,, 5.	Points of dissent from the elder theology	39
,, 6.	Jesus the only objective power; this alone is true Protestantism	40

CHAPTER IV.—*Our relation to Luther.*

SECTION 1.	Luther's Protestantism observed our method	41
,, 2.	Luther's doctrine of Scripture not necessarily perfect	41
,, 3.	Luther's acceptance of Catholic dogma not necessarily right	42
,, 4.	Luther's Christianity *v.* Luther's theology	42
,, 5.	The danger if reaction be demanded touching Scripture	43
,, 6.	The similar danger touching dogma	43
,, 7.	Conservative theologians will admit this	44
,, 8.	The real relation to Luther	45

BOOK II.—GOD'S COMMUNION WITH US.

CHAPTER I.—*God communes with us through Jesus Christ.*

SECTION 1.	God does not commune with us through mere grasp of the idea of the eternal	49
,, 2.	Nor through a set of doctrines which are first to be believed	50
,, 3.	God communes with us through a fact	51
,, 4.	This simple matter is often obscured	52
,, 5.	Our idea of God and of communion with Him does not depend upon a general induction from the ideas of all sorts of men	53
,, 6.	Our own position in history must be taken into account	54
,, 7.	Two classes of objectors	55
,, 8.	Is the first objection valid?	56
,, 9.	Analysis of the relation of story to fact. (i.) The effect of confidence in the narrator	57

Book II. Chap. I.—*Continued.* PAGE

SECTION 10. Analysis continued. Fact *v.* Report. (ii.) Careful critical estimate of reports - - - - 58
,, 11. Analysis continued. Narrative *v.* Historical reality. (iii.) Even the historian's certainty is an insufficient basis for religious life - - 59
,, 12. Analysis continued. Narrative *v.* Reality. (iv.) All these results insufficient as a basis for religion 60
,, 13. The actual basis; the picture of Jesus' inner life; how known - - - - - - - - 60
,, 14. How certainty of this becomes absolutely ours - 61
,, 15. The value of historical study of records - - 63
,, 16. The Person of Jesus is and must be an element in the reality of our own life - - - 64
,, 17. Hence the prime importance of preaching Christ and nothing else instead - - - 65
,, 18. Redemption, not doctrine, the first thing to be obtained - - - - - - - 66
,, 19. What is redemption? - - - - - - 67

CHAPTER II.—*How we see God in Jesus.*

SECTION 1. The limits which the story of Jesus imposes upon the historian - - - - - - - 70
,, 2. The admitted features of the story of Jesus - 71
,, 3. Jesus' perfect confidence in His success - - 72
,, 4. Jesus' perfect moral strength and His consciousness of it - - - - - - - 73
,, 5. Jesus claimed to give and to be God's greatest gift to men - - - - - - - - 76
,, 6. Jesus not a teacher concerning redemptive powers other than Himself - - - - 76
,, 7. Jesus brings men into the Kingdom of God - 77
,, 8. We see in Jesus the Almighty God - - - 78
,, 9. God in Jesus Christ frees us from sin, from its condemnation and from its power - - 79
,, 10. The revelation of God is thus complete in Christ - - - - - - - - 81
,, 11. How shall we secure the rise of faith? - - 82
,, 12. The objective grounds of the Christian faith - 82
,, 13. The Christian cannot leave this Impregnable Rock for any customary beliefs - - - 84

Book II. Chap. II.—*Continued.* PAGE

SECTION 14. The quicksands of the customary "foundations" socalled - - - - - - - - 85
,, 15. Jesus Christ Himself is the vital principle of our religion - - - - - - - - 87
,, 16. Objections considered - - - - - - 88
,, 17. Summary - - - - - - - - - 90

CHAPTER III.—*God's Increasing Communion with us.*

SECTION 1. Jesus' gift is ever unfolding afresh for us - - 92
,, 2. The revelation of God in Christ to children - 93
,, 3. The later needs, in maturer years - - - 93
,, 4. The rise of the sense of the need of God. Jesus meets it - - - - - - - - 95
,, 5. What is Jesus' redemption of us? - - - 97
,, 6. He transforms the old world for us and brings in a new one - - - - - - - - 97
,, 7. Doctrines concerning Jesus cannot do this; they may do the opposite - - - - - - 99
,, 8. He who would confess the Deity of Christ must first know Jesus, and Jesus' influence upon His life - - - - - - - - 100
,, 9. He who would confess that Jesus is God, must also have recognised God - - - - - 101
,, 10. The injury done to men by the customary doctrine of the atonement - - - - - 102
,, 11. The merits and defects of the Reformers' doctrine of the atonement - - - - - 103
,, 12. The doctrine of vicarious suffering; its real significance; and its mistaken use - - 106
,, 13. Luther's idea of vicarious satisfaction - - 108
,, 14. Forgiveness: the Socinian and rationalistic doctrine of it; the orthodox doctrine of it; the truth concerning it - - - - - 110
,, 15. How we see God in Christ - - - - - 110
,, 16. The words, "Deity of Christ," simply express accurately what we experience in such redemption - - - - - - - - 111

CHAPTER IV.—*Luther and Christ.*

SECTION 1. Luther's reverence for dogma; and his advance from the older view of it - - - - - 115

Book II. Chap. IV.—*Continued.* PAGE.

Section 2. Luther's view as to the two natures in Christ - 117
,, 3. Luther's strong sense of the Deity of Christ illustrated - - - - - - - - 118
,, 4. Luther's conception nevertheless richer than that of the elder dogma - - - - - - 119
,, 5. Second note of greater richness in Luther's Christology. Trust in the Deity of Christ is to Luther a confidence which is life in Christ - - - - - - - - - 123
,, 6. Third point of superiority: Luther's idea of the rise of faith in the Deity of Christ - - 127
,, 7. Luther keeps the old dogma, but with quite a new meaning. (i.) He finds God in Jesus; not so the dogma - - - - - - - 131
(ii.) Redemption is entirely God's act upon us; not so in the dogma - - - - - 132
(iii.) The human life of Jesus has a new interest; none is needed for the dogma - 132

Chapter V.—*Of the essential Deity of Christ.*

Section 1. Is the predicate "deity" of real importance? Two replies to the question. (i.) The mere name is not very important - - - - - 134
,, 2. (ii.) Second reply: our view of Christ's Deity alone justifiable in Protestant Christianity - 135
,, 3. We teach herewith the essential Deity of Jesus: the dogma does not - - - - - 137
,, 4. Our conception of the Deity of Christ is certainly different from that of the dogma - - - 139
,, 5. The dogmatic idea of the Deity of Christ is an imperfect effort at reflection, and is injurious 140
,, 6. Grounds for excusing the mistake of present-day dogmatists - - - - - - 141

Chapter VI.—*Of God's Communion with the individual.*

Section 1. What is immediate contact of the soul with God? - - - - - - - - - 143
,, 2. The Christian smiles at all claims to private revelations - - - - - - - - 145
,, 3. There is a sense in which God communes with each soul in a special way - - - - - 146

Book II. Chap. VI.—*Continued.* Page.

Section 4. Our environment by the church - - - - 147
,, 5. The second important environment wherein God communes with us is "Christian persons" - 148
,, 6. These utterances of God thrown away by a certain theory of the saving church - - 148
,, 7. Luther's mind on this - - - - - - 148
,, 8. The official priest robs - - - - - - 149
,, 9. Third means of God's communion with us: All the events of a Christian's life - - - 150
,, 10. Fourth means of God's communion with us: Life in the morally necessary, or the Infinite 150
,, 11. And another means is fellowship with all true religions - - - - - - - - - 153
,, 12. Conclusion - - - - - - - - - 154

BOOK III.—OUR COMMUNION WITH GOD.

Chapter I.—*We commune with God in Christian Faith.*

Section 1. God's aim fulfilled - - - - - - - 159
,, 2. Where is the God we pray to? - - - - - 159
,, 3. We cannot *begin* with prayer - - - - - 160
,, 4. Our communion must be in the realm of the morally infinite - - - - - - - 161
,, 5. The Reformers declare that we can be perfect only in fulfilling our calling - - - - - 163
,, 6. The Roman Catholic and mistaken idea of perfect life with God - - - - - - 164
,, 7. True devotion to God should consist in true devotion to men - - - - - - - 165
,, 8. All this gives us only the necessary *form* for communion - - - - - - - - 166

Chapter II.—*Of the nature of Christian faith.*

Section 1. What is devotion itself? - - - - - 167
,, 2. True faith is no mere presupposition, such as assent to doctrines - - - - - - 168
,, 3. Nor is faith a mere presupposition such as accepting the Biblical stories for true - - 169
,, 4. Is faith to be dissected into human elements and divine elements? - - - - - - 170
,, 5. Luther insisted on an objective ground of faith - 173

Book III. Chap. II.—*Continued.* PAGE.

Section 6. The true nature of faith - - - - - 173
,, 7. Faith impels to historical study; not historical study to faith - - - - - - - 177
,, 8. Faith gives birth to fearless criticism - - - 179
,, 9. Such faith distinguishes the Person of Jesus clearly from the miracles - - - - 182
,, 10. Of the tendency to make religion as easy as possible; as seen (i.) in systems of theology 184
,, 11. Of the same tendency as seen (ii.) in the so-called but false loyalty to the sacred Scriptures - 186
,, 12. Conclusion. Such faith needs no supplementation - - - - - - - - - 188

Chapter III.—*Of the Inner Contents of Christian Faith.*

Section 1. Entire submission to God - - - - - 189
,, 2. Our communion with God means also recognition of His actual creative power - - - 191
,, 3. Our communion with God means also certainty that our sins are forgiven - - - - - 192
,, 4. Forgiveness is not the momentary act of an official - - - - - - - - - 193
,, 5. The experience of forgiveness comes as an astounding revelation - - - - - 194
,, 6. Luther's view of the matter - - - - 195
,, 7. Such trust towards God is perfect communion with Him in all our daily affairs - - - 198
,, 8. What is the true separation from the world? - 200
,, 9. Of freedom and grateful joy as communion with God - - - - - - - - - 203
,, 10. The kingship of the believer - - - - 205
,, 11. Christian humility - - - - - - 206
,, 12. The fear of God - - - - - - - 207
,, 13. The Christian's love to God as shown in love to his neighbour - - - - - - 209
,, 14. The Christian's love to God; its immediate manifestation - - - - - - 211
,, 15. Luther's view of sensuous love to God - - 213
,, 16. Of sensuous contemplation of Christ - - - 215
,, 17. Sensuous contemplation of Christ insufficient in view of the future; and as a theory of Christ's Redemption - - - - - 219

CHAPTER IV.—*Of Christ's Eternal Life.* PAGE.

SECTION 1. How do we come to this conception? - - 221
,, 2. Communion with God is possible, but not with the Exalted Christ - - - - - - 223
,, 3. The real channel for our relationship to the Exalted Christ - - - - - - - 225

CHAPTER V.—*Of Faith as both a Gift and an Act.*

SECTION 1. Faith is real in activity - - - - - - 227
,, 2. The Christian communes with God in right occupations - - - - - - - - 228
,, 3. Luther's view of communion with God in our daily callings - - - - - - - 230
,, 4. Faith gives the *power* needful for moral conduct - 230
,, 5. Of the victory over temptation - - - - 232
,, 6. Faith gives more than the power to be good: it gives also the impulse - - - - 234
,, 7. This motive overcoming all painful hindrances - 236
,, 8. The readiness to bear the cross - - - - 239
,, 9. Of necessary advance on Luther - - - 240

CHAPTER VI.—*Of Christian Prayer.*

SECTION 1. It must spring from faith - - - - - 243
,, 2. And real faith will necessarily cause prayer - 244
,, 3. Of directions for prayer. It is a thanksgiving - 246
,, 4. The misuse of prayer - - - - - - 249

CHAPTER VII.—*Of New Life.*

SECTION 1. Of the Christian's definite valuation of himself. He is born anew - - - - - - - 251
,, 2. We do not experience new birth; we are born again - - - - - - - - - 252
,, 3. Mistaken ideas concerning the act and article of new birth - - - - - - - - 254
,, 4. Is this rightly to be called a new birth? - - 256
,, 5. The real service done by baptism - - - 258
,, 6. The thoughts of faith do not come by any sensuous experiences - - - - - 259
,, 7. Scientific demand is duly met at the right place - 26

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION.

I. *THE PRESENT THEOLOGICAL POSITION.*

Ritschl's appearance.

§1. The first edition of this book began with a reference to the confusion which was occasioned in Protestant theology by the appearance of Albrecht Ritschl. So much commotion was aroused by his energetic labour, that the positions hitherto held became insecure and quite uncomfortable. It was quite natural that the elder men among us rose against Ritschl in hot displeasure. Had he not shaken the foundations on which they thought they might work in safety?

The opposition divided.

§2. There was nothing remarkable in the situation, except the fact that representatives of kindred schools of thought often raised objections against Ritschl which served only to neutralise each other. Along with the unanimous opposition to Ritschl, there became apparent the deepest lack of unity within the attacking camps themselves. It manifested itself on all sides to a surprising extent. Had we nothing else to thank him for, we should owe Ritschl a debt of gratitude for having brought this weakness to light.

Ritschl's influence and that of other teachers.

§3. There was in his life-time, and there is still, no theologian who, like Ritschl, could draw many persons into the circle of his own labour, and could stimulate them to a common activity. It cannot be said that either Frank on the one side, or Lipsius on the other, has gained such an influence. Frank has had a great reputation, but he must be very little read, for no trace is discoverable of the influence of his theology upon those very church circles where he himself is so praised. Indeed, the very thing which Frank energetically combats is, in these circles, not unfrequently held to be an essential constituent of church life. Possibly it is that his books are difficult to read, and his friends are complaisant, or, perhaps, too much occupied; and to these causes probably we owe it that they do not discover that his theology is something far removed from them. Of course,

it is always good that the names of these men are held in esteem, but it would be far better if their theology could mould and guide the life which is lived within the Protestant Church. This is not the case. It is much more true to say that hearts are being won almost exclusively through the influences set in motion by Ritschl.

Is there a Ritschlian school?

§4. Since Ritschl's death, however, another change has taken place, which must be noted. Besides the eagerness to do battle with him, there is now arising a still greater desire to do him justice, to understand him and to learn from him. Hence the gap has been lessened between the so-called disciples of Ritschl and the other theological groups. A school of Ritschl, as it exists in the war-like imagination of our opponents, does not exist in reality, so far as I know. None of the theologians who are especially supposed to belong to that school are ready to defend Ritschl's dogmatic theology at every point. But we have learned more from Ritschl than from any theologian since Schleiermacher.

The real question of theology.

§5. It is past all doubt the fact that in the last decade all workers in the field of German theology have been driven to consider the questions which arise, not only in the study of the theologian, but in the soul of everyone who tries to lead a Christian life. If theologians are careful at all, amid the present enormous lapse from Christianity, they must surely feel for the thousands who have lost their hold on the Gospel, because they have found that certain presuppositions have utterly vanished upon which the preaching of the Church used to be based. In all schools of theology, therefore, which are not merely sitting in judgement on this lapse, but are seeking to help the troubled, men are endeavouring to construct, certainly not the Gospel itself, but as certainly the way to lay hold of the Gospel. Some are attempting to justify afresh the presuppositions hitherto held to be vital to the Christian life, such as the authority of the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and the validity of the knowledge of God as obtained by scientific processes. Others are endeavouring to discover within the Gospel itself something which makes it accessible without the need for those presuppositions.

Ritschl's method.

§6. The latter path was taken by Ritschl. If others have done the same independently, no man need take it ill that Ritschl has given to many younger theologians the most powerful encouragement they have received in this direction. Among those theologians who have taken the former course there is great divergence of opinion. This could hardly be otherwise, since they employ historical probabilities and philosophical propositions as their bases of Christian belief and preaching. They work thus with elements which are either uncertain or capable of various interpretation. Quite a contrast to all this is the general harmony among those who have worked along the path taken by Ritschl. These have sought to deal exclusively with the contents of the Gospel. There have been other attempts besides these two to solve the theological problem, but they do not, for the present, require consideration. They either take their origin in the philosophy of a bygone epoch of thought, like the highly trained subjectivity of Frank, or they have won for themselves, as a matter of fact, no considerable importance. This, of course, may soon be otherwise, but, for the present, the position of theology in Germany may be fairly described as comprising the two tendencies mentioned above.

II. *THE COMMON WARFARE AND LIFE.*

There is a bond in our common need.

§1. If the foregoing be the case, it might reasonably be expected that that which unites us all must be stronger than that which divides us. Certainly on both sides we are sensible that the more highly educated are becoming more and more estranged from Christianity, and that the masses are following them. How much we are spiritually impoverished may be seen from a comparison of the vigorous poetry of the beginning of the present century with the daily nourishment provided by talented men of our own time. Then there was a flowing stream of Christian ideas, and the greatest poet of all was intimate with the Bible.[1] Now, on the contrary, we find the more serious striving uncertainly after a new solution of the

(1) See H. Henkel, "Goethe and the Bible," Leipzig, 1890.

world's riddle, and the majority only endeavouring to cover the emptiness of real life, as they conceive it, by the play of fancy. At the same time, we are afflicted with an art whose aim is to pourtray with painful diligence the pitiful features of the emptiest life.

The want met by the Gospel.

§2. Now if we know how rich is Jesus Christ, and if we have experienced the fact that through Him the needs of human life are truly satisfied, then surely our joy in this knowledge and the desire to make it known should unite us. Nevertheless, union is scarcely perceptible, even in defence against our common foe, and in face of the need universally felt. We do indeed believe, concerning one another, that each is serving the present generation, and does desire to preserve the old Gospel, but our union does not extend much further than this. For what is the Gospel which is to be preserved? When this question is asked, there immediately arises the suspicion that the one party will not free the Gospel from the husks of doctrines which have now grown incomprehensible, or that the other party, in giving up the husk, has also parted with the kernel.

Life needs light.

§3. In religion only that can help us before which we bow, and the Gospel can help us only if we understand it. It is at this point that all those differences arise in the conception and presentation of Christianity which so entangle us. If we were willing to ignore these differences for the sake of the practical task we have in common, then we should abandon one of the most essential tasks of theology, and instead of serving the interests of peace, we should only increase our common weakness. We must therefore battle through these difficulties. If we work out faithfully the problems which are set for Christian thought by its very object, then our inner life will be enriched, and this will be manifest in Christian conduct.

Common personal Christianity.

§4. There will still be plenty of complaints that the Gospel is being concealed or curtailed. But some mitigation of the difficulty may perhaps be reached if we devote our attention to that which is usually conceded by the one opponent to the other. Each acknowledges the personal Christianity of the other. Well, then, let us seek to describe what

we understand by personal Christianity. Christians are fully agreed as to its general meaning. It is a communion of the soul with the living God through the mediation of Christ. Herein is really included all that belongs to the characteristic life of Christendom—revelation and faith, conversion and the comfort of forgiveness, the joy of faith and the service of love, life with God alone, and life in Christian fellowship. All this is then only truly Christian when it is experienced as communion with the living God through the mediation of Christ. When we believe in a man's personal Christianity we are convinced that he stands in that relation towards God which has thus been described.

Life real, while the theory of it may be wrong.

§5. The Reformers never doubted that Christianity in this sense might be, and continue to be, even amid the perverted teaching of the Romish Church, and so it is among ourselves. I hold the theological teaching of Frank, Lipsius and Luthardt to be wrong; I believe I see clearly how such teaching hinders the man who surrenders himself to it from coming to Christ and through Him to God; I think I know why this is the case. But I hold these teachers themselves to be Christians, to whom I owe many a good word of faith. Still, I cannot help observing that they sometimes lapse into a theology in which little that is Christian is to be discovered. The fact is that, as theologians, they are products of their age; as Christians, they are created of God in a fashion that is far otherwise. By the strength of that which has come to them through no medium of doctrine, they are enabled to move as Christians beneath the fetters of their "systems."

This life must be set forth.

§6. This faith in the power of a personal Christianity that is born of God is indispensable to us who are Protestants. We must believe that personal Christianity can arise in spite of wrong teaching, and can remain alive amid obsolete ecclesiastical forms. If this be the case, then Protestant theology is bound to set forth and expound precisely this personal Christianity in which they believe all Christians to be at one.

III. *FREEDOM OF LIFE, AND NEED FOR THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT.*

Doctrine must be various.

§1. Again, the need for treatment of this subject is seen still further when we remember that there must be different teaching among Christians, and this not only on matters where we may feel it necessary to make some distasteful compromise with tradition, but also where the question may concern the expression of our inmost faith. A doctrine which really springs from faith takes on necessarily a number of forms. The Christian seeks to express in such a doctrine the reality amid which his faith lives. But since that reality is infinite, therefore the limited doctrine in which one Christian seeks to express what his faith sees, cannot be laid down as the limit of utterance for other believers. Various men see various visions, and therefore they must speak various words if they mean to be truthful. All attempts at union through uniformity of doctrines, whether few or many, are futile, even when men succeed in building of them such a structure that it lasts over a thousand years. Personal, living Christianity will always follow its own free course in unfolding its thoughts; it is inaccessible to that method of knowledge which holds in material affairs.

Preaching and doctrine.

§2. We may see this fact illustrated in every sermon that comes truly from the preacher's heart. That heart, deeply moved by the Spirit of God, thinks very little of any doctrinal theory or of any theological system ruled by such, but very much of the free testimony of the faith of other men. In the outpourings of such a heart, therefore, the elder faiths, on which the new is climbing with all its own peculiarities, will certainly be expressed in some measure; but the man, being really taught of God, will bring forth out of his treasure, along with the old, some new things also, which are by no means to be understood as the mere logical consequences of the old.

The New Testament and the rise of dogma.

§3. So, too, in the origination of particular doctrines, there have been many contributory thoughts all springing from the Spirit of God, and thus the idea of dogma as a uniform doctrinal theory is contrary to the working

of the Holy Spirit. A uniform doctrinal theory seeks to dominate the Christian community, and it demands that only itself and its consequences shall be contained in the thoughts of the Christian. But the Holy Spirit works synthetically, not analytically, and the composition of the New Testament clearly shows this. If Christians seek unity by means of unalterable doctrine, then they must give up the authority of the New Testament. For in the New Testament there is no unalterable doctrine which embraces the whole scheme of Christian thought. If the effort be made notwithstanding to construct a system which shall guarantee the unity of the Church, with the New Testament as guide, then the wonderful and many-sided teaching that is contained in those Scriptures will be found to be somehow imperfect. Such a feeling is unavoidable if we attempt at once to teach according to Scripture, and, at the same time, to have unalterable doctrine as a condition of the unity of fellowship. He who wishes to teach according to Scripture had better make up his mind that to seek doctrines which shall be unalterable, and equally binding upon all, is to seek a false ideal. Were it a true ideal, then we should have to give up the New Testament, whereas we must rather intrench ourselves within it. It is no imperfection, it is rather an excellence, and thoroughly as it should be, that the Epistles of the New Testament are messages for definite circumstances, and not contributions to a doctrinal system which shall be valid to all eternity.

IV. *OF DOCTRINAL UNITY.*

Its value not in mere average ideas.

§1. The want of unity in doctrine certainly *seems* a disadvantage. What would a church be without a confession? If, therefore, the New Testament does not furnish a definitely framed system of religious thought, such perhaps does lie hidden underneath the manifold utterances of faith contained in the Scriptures? In that case it would be the business of the theology which desires to construct a uniform doctrine for the Christian Church, to quarry out this hidden system from Holy Scripture. In this way certainly a sort of average combination of Biblical ways of thinking could be obtained, but it would be quite unserviceable when we had got it. For such an average

combination of thoughts, so arranged, has never existed organically in a living man. If we should try to follow such a combination, we should be setting up a law which might seem easy to fulfil, but we should not advance a step towards the kind of thinking which is found in Scriptural writers.

The real bond of unity.

§2. What really unites Christians one with another and with the witness of the New Testament is not the complete identity of our thoughts, but the entire likeness of our ways of thinking, and the unity of the revelation by which that likeness is caused. Illustration of both of these is to be seen everywhere in the New Testament, in the same way as with us. There are, on the one hand, the same Jesus and the conception of God as His Father which is inseparable from Him, and, on the other, the same personal life redeemed by the God who is thus manifest, or, in other words, the same faith. Every Christian who reads the New Testament for his edification will take these two things in it, and gain thence the proper nourishment for his soul.

What is personal Christianity?

§3. We hold a man to be really a Christian when we believe we have ample evidence that God has revealed Himself to him in Jesus Christ, and that now the man's inner life is taking on a new character through his communion with the God who is thus manifest. But if this is certain, then it is certainly the business of theology to set forth and expound this communion of the Christian with God through Jesus Christ. And in this way alone can the Christian be guided by the New Testament as the principle of Protestantism demands, while, on the other hand, the notion that it is possible for the Christian to know and hold all the various doctrines uttered in the New Testament is, to put it plainly, a monstrous fiction. No Christian does so, and none can. To state all these doctrines correctly is the business of historical enquiry; it is an arduous task, and one that is never accomplished with certainty. Such an enquiry is not within the power of every Christian. The manifold nature of the doctrines uttered in the Scriptures corresponds indeed to the real nature of the life of faith, but it forbids a Christian to appropriate to himself equally all the processes of thought recorded by those writers.

The Christian's real and indispensable use of the New Testament.

§4. The authority of the New Testament, which gives the needed and safe guidance to every Christian, has for its sphere something quite different from fixity of doctrine, namely, the communion of the Christian with God through Jesus Christ. Whenever the authority of the New Testament is extended so as to belong to its doctrines, that authority is diminished. Into the place of the New Testament there inevitably step those theological products which offer a unity of doctrine not found within its pages. If, however, we have learned to make much of that which God's revelation produces in the inner life of a Christian, then, in our reading of Scripture, we shall constantly meet with an authority by which we shall be safely led and wonderfully uplifted.

V. *OF UNITY OF LIFE.*

Our study will lead to unity.

§1. When we do comprehend the communion of the Christian with God, that will show us wherein Christians are truly at one. In the inner life of faith all is ruled by the one God and the one Christ. Of course, in the exposition of such a life the development of particular doctrines must be set forth; but unities of doctrine beyond these limits are not legitimate, because not vital to faith. They are worthless dreams which arouse useless strife, and hinder the unity of the Christian Church. To fix doctrines that are thus severed from the stem of real life, and to frame them into a system, is not a task which at all concerns the Christian Church, and the more prominent such illegitimate matter becomes, the more harmful it is.

The variety of doctrine will be a blessing.

§2. But if, on the other hand, we keep our attention fixed on what God is producing in the Christian's inner life, then the manifoldness of the thoughts which spring from faith will not confuse us, but give us cause for joy. For we can then understand that the manifoldness is both necessary and valuable. Hence we must cease attempting to bind together into one system the many thoughts which faith has uttered during a varied past, and we may not make the unity of the Church depend on any product of the

kind. No confession ever arose thus which believers could unanimously and heartily accept.

The true confession of faith.

§3. The Church's confession of faith ought to be the confession of real faith. But this is only possible where faith itself, or the personal life of the Christian, the life redeemed by God, becomes clearly conscious of itself. Whatever faith conscious of itself says concerning itself, its origin and the forms of its own life, that is the real confession of faith. Such a confession is the Christian's means of expressing himself to his fellows when the faith which God has wrought is alive within them. On these grounds, for a church which desires to be really a fellowship of believers, there can be no theological task more important than that of setting forth that inner life of faith, or that communion with God in which we really find ourselves at one.

Faith needs an object.

§4. Of course many persons fear that if we set the problem in this way, we are going to resolve Christianity entirely into subjective experiences. Their conviction is certainly right that the inner life of the Christian faith is extinguished if we forget or do not know a certain objective Christian reality, and cease to find our support in it. It remains to be seen whether, as we proceed, our exposition will disarm all suspicion that we are losing sight of this reality; but the error of subjectivity by no means necessarily follows from the problem as now stated. This certainly does follow: that the knowledge of the objective Christian realities is the only nourishment on which faith is fed. It is not possible to prove to an unbeliever the truth of the things which a Christian knows concerning the objective reality. His knowledge is inseparable from faith; and no one can gain an insight into its truth who is not sensible of the peculiar problems of life as lived in that sphere of moral thought. But just because this Christian knowledge is grasped in its truth only by those who occupy already the standpoint of faith, it is all the more needful to describe quite clearly the inner life of faith, wherein that Christian knowledge has its place. If we wish to settle our differences concerning doctrine, then, above all things, we must know what we mean by the inner life of faith, or, in other words,

how we conceive of the communion of the Christian with God. Every theological discussion which does not sound these depths is in danger of that very calamity of subjectivity which others prophesy for us. The true objectivity of Christian knowledge and its truth for believers must be lost unless it is protected by clear views concerning the life of faith.

The right course to pursue.

§5. The path on which we here enter is the only possible way to agreement concerning Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, the objection was put forward against this treatise, when it first appeared, that it did not help men to a mutual understanding. It was said that I did an injustice to those who were against me by caricaturing their views. I earned this reproach by prefacing my own exposition with a sketch of our opponents' conception of the communion of the Christian with God. Such an undertaking was, however, useless. For the slightest mistake in such a description is sure to arouse the suspicion of a desire to put one's opponent in the wrong by imputing to him what is not true. It is better, therefore, simply to set forth how the life which a Christian leads with God presents itself to the writer, and then to wait and see what positive arguments others can bring against that exposition. By this means, we may hope that the errors on either side will be clearly brought to light, and confuted in a Christian spirit. Strife over doctrines is not very profitable, until we are thoroughly agreed as to how they arise out of the organic life of faith. Until then, no one who takes part in the discussion can rightly understand either his opponent or himself. We do need positive expositions of that inner life which we know to be a Christian reality. But, of course, amid these expositions, the deepest antagonisms will inevitably come to light. Nevertheless, there remains with the truly pious man a consciousness of that unity which will gradually transform these antagonisms, let us hope, replacing them by individual expressions of an unspeakably precious common possession. Let us proceed, then, to treat of that inner religious life which is common to us all.

BOOK I.

CHRISTIANITY *VERSUS* MYSTICISM

CHAPTER I.

RELIGION AS CONCEIVED BY THE MYSTICS.

The essential experience of all religion.

§ 1. We are all at one in the conviction that the inner life of religion is a secret in the soul, and cannot be handed over from one to another. No human being can so help another by the information he may give him that the latter shall be put in possession of what is best in religion. Each individual must experience it for himself as a gift from above. Every man to whom religion is something more than a store of knowledge or a burden of commandments, experiences at times a certain stirring of feeling within him, amid which alone he is able to gain due profit from all that is of religious significance. The man who is acquainted with these movings within knows also that he needs neither special reflection nor instruction to explain them. He has, on the contrary, so strong a sense of being possessed, as it were, that he must say "This is God." At such a time God makes Himself felt, and sets the man in that inward condition which is blessedness. In this frame of mind the words, "God is present," are the simple expression of the simple experience. Of course, even with the most pious of men such a state could not last always, nor could it relieve every inward pain. Nevertheless, traces of the experience remain in the soul which has passed through it, and keep alive the desire for its peace. Now this longing, or this affinity for that which edifies one religiously, in short, the impulse to order the inward and outward conditions of life so that the experience of the nearness of God may fill these even more, this is unbrokenness of religious life. But the sacred moments when we experience God's immediate presence are not the mere highwater mark to which the religious life attains. Without that experience of God all the rest is so empty and vain that it does not deserve the name of religion. It is in such experience

we find the very essence of religion, that secret inalienable possession of the soul. He who does not understand and warmly sympathise with the many witnesses to such a frame of mind, cannot be a Christian. In this experience Christians find themselves at one with all devout men of every name. But precisely on this account it is evident that we have not yet described what is peculiarly characteristic of Christian piety. Although we share these experiences already described in common with other devout persons and reverence their sacredness, yet we must not let that escape us which is peculiarly Christian. In what, then, does this consist? If we are convinced that without an experience of the mysterious working of God upon the soul no religion would be of any value whatsoever, it is but a step to the inference that this very experience is the essential thing in all religions, and therefore also in Christianity. And so we must regard those various qualities which are peculiar to the various religions simply as a means of preparation for that essential experience, or as a particular consequence of the same.

Roman Catholic mysticism not Christian

§2. This conception of the relation between the essential and the particular in religions has played an important part in history. It forms one of the most important elements in Roman Catholicism. In the Roman Catholic Church the supernatural power of a particular Christian cultus and of particular Christian doctrines is insisted upon with great force. And yet, wherever in Catholicism religion has remained a living thing, it has always been a life of just such experiences as we have found to be essential in every devout life. Mere submission to the laws of a cultus or of doctrine certainly cannot of itself constitute religion. The kind of religion which in Roman Catholicism appears to be bound up with such submission is a sort of spirituality which is either indifferent to what is specifically Christian, or at most but loosely connected with it. The forms in which this spirituality or inner life finds expression have no prototypes in the New Testament. They were derived from the more religious features of the dying civilisation of antiquity. The most conspicuous features of the Roman Catholic

rule of life are obedience to the laws of cultus and of doctrine on the one side and Neo-platonic mysticism on the other.

The various forms of Roman Catholic Christianity.

§3. The combination of these two features makes it possible for Roman Catholic Christianity to assume many and varied forms. At different times greater or less use of cultus and of doctrine has resulted in a varied amount of preparation for the real experience of religion. The link with the historical Christ which both preserve, has served in varying degree to modify the religious experience without depriving it of its mystical character. At the same time it has been possible, where the approach to Christ has not been entirely obstructed, that the impression He makes has led on to another kind of religious experience which is not mystical, but really Christian. Then there has been the long range of variations, from the sublimest forms of Neo-platonic mysticism at the one extreme, down to that sort of acknowledgment of divine power at the other which is based only on the faint emotion aroused by the mysteries of cultus, of dogma, and of legends. But all the forms of piety which have a place in this series have this feature in common: they are mystical. And it is in these alone that we may see and study the kind of religion which is characteristic of Roman Catholicism.

The essence of mysticism.

§4. The essence of mysticism lies herein: that the whole of its religious life never gets beyond the experience of that long series just named. When the influence of God upon the soul is sought and found solely in an inward experience of the individual; when certain excitements of the emotions are taken, with no further question, as evidence that the soul is possessed by God; when, at the same time, nothing external to the soul is consciously and clearly perceived and firmly grasped; when no thoughts that elevate the spiritual life are aroused by the positive contents of an idea that rules the soul—then that is the piety of mysticism. He who seeks in this wise that for the sake of which he is ready to abandon all beside, has stepped beyond the pale of Christian piety. He leaves Christ and

Christ's Kingdom altogether behind him when he enters that sphere of experience which seems to him to be the highest.

Mysticism must be independent of historical reality.

§5. It is possible that an earnest and intimate attachment to Christ and a powerful impulse towards love of our fellow men may co-exist with mysticism. But although this is often to be seen, and richly too, even in the greater mystics of the Roman Catholic Church, yet it is none the less clear that whenever the religious feeling in them soars to its highest flights, then they are torn loose from Christ and float away in precisely the same realm with the non-Christian mystics of all ages. "How can we expect adherence to historical reality when all the powers of the imagination are let loose and regarded as the organ of union with the Deity? The mystics within the Church sought to guard themselves against passionate, unrestrained and pantheistic piety, but they often forgot themselves, to say the least, when they rose to their highest exhortations. These always lacked their full momentum so long as they took any notice of whatever was outside of God and their own souls."[1] Their yearning after God Himself could never endure the trammels of the historical.

Thus Roman Catholicism degrades everything that may be counted as positive Christianity into a mere means of preparation for the highest plane of the religious life. On that plane itself, and in those moments when enjoyment of the highest is vouchsafed, the soul is held to be free from external things. If such a freedom of the soul in God be regarded as the blessed goal, then any command to hold fast by what is historical may count on small obedience. For the fact that everything historical sinks into insignificance when God is really found, may so dominate the soul of the individual that he may become totally indifferent to the doctrine of the importance of the historical in Christianity.

Mysticism and the doctrines of the church.

§6. Certainly, on the other hand, the prospect of reaching such a goal may lighten the burdens imposed by the prescription of incomprehensible doctrines. If we know that when we reach the highest plane of religious

(1) Harnack, Textbook of the History of Dogma, Vol. 3, p. 382.

experience we shall obtain religious freedom in all its fulness, we may perhaps afford to endure the acceptance of a dogma which denies such freedom, meanwhile, of course, and by way of preparation for that highest plane and its expected freedom. And then besides, since the highest joys in mysticism, as in all religion, are sure to have in them something of the miraculous, the difficulty of comprehending the means of preparation for those joys will seem exactly suited to the case. The method is mysterious, but just so much the better. It was on this wise, we know, that Thomas Aquinas justified the irrationality of dogma; and, so to speak, made it rational. The conversion of the historical in Christianity into an incomprehensible mystery thus suits well the mystic conception of religion. Each of the two features certainly puts a strain upon the other; but this very strain serves in Roman Catholic piety as a propelling force. Devout submission to dogma and to the greatest absurdities of cultus may produce in really pious persons a state of mind in which the soul counts itself free from all external bonds, not excluding even the historical revelation of God in Christ. The most of us, of course, get no further than these means of preparation, and therefore never arrive at a real personal experience of religion. Such souls, however, live in a sort of union with the others who are truly religiously alive; for even these latter continue their devotion to the incomprehensible, believing that thereby they gain a mysterious strength that lifts them up to God.

The tendency towards mysticism among Protestants.

§7. It is natural that Roman Catholics, who have discovered the paths of mysticism and are conscious of their freedom and independence, should exult somewhat over us who are Protestants. For we are not at liberty to seek freedom from positive religion in the way which they have taken; and yet we seem to be not a little burdened with things which we cannot comprehend. If Catholics regard our kind of Christianity as only a sort of half-religion, their judgment is somewhat confirmed by the fact that, while, on the one hand, we are impelled towards mysticism by the same motives as they, we are, on the other hand, held back by our church principles.

And so long as we preserve what is in reality Roman Catholic dogma in a somewhat modified form, and regard the historical in Christianity as something incomprehensible, this unsatisfactory condition of ours will continue. So long as we do so, those pious persons among us who fancy that in God the soul becomes free and independent will take refuge in mysticism, despite all obstacles. A. Lasson, a Protestant expounder of mysticism, declares plainly that mysticism is necessary in Christianity, because without it there is nothing left but submission to doctrines imposed by external authority. I suspect that this view is secretly cherished by many theologians. On the other hand, however, it is not quite forgotten that a consistent mysticism is fraught with danger to positive Christianity. Hence men speak of a "sound" mysticism which is to be carefully preserved. But when we ask: "What is sound mysticism?" we are told it is the conviction that we stand in actual communion with God. This conviction, however, is no speciality of mysticism, for without it there can be no religion at all.

This desire to retain mysticism in Protestant Christianity is by no means to be explained as a wish to exalt that which is common to all religion. For mysticism is not that which is common to all religion, but a particular species of religion, namely, a piety which feels that which is historical in the positive religion to be burdensome, and so rejects it. When we find Protestant theologians who count themselves strictly orthodox so frequently desire at the same time to retain mysticism, we must conclude that they view the mysticism as a saving counterpoise over against the historical. While they feel the historical to be indispensable, it is nevertheless a burden to them.

For classical examples of precisely this attitude we have to go to the mendicant orders of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In them we can see a practical illustration of the antithesis just described between the irksomeness of the historical and the freedom of mysticism. The greatness of these men consists in the energy with which, as theologians and churchmen, they worked out the consequences of that antithesis. If Protestant theologians to-day think that they cannot part company with mysticism, then

they really admit that they cannot free themselves from Roman Catholicism, of which mysticism is the real religious life.

The merits of mediæval mysticism.

§8. A man like R. Rothe could name nothing better than the writings of the mystics as an aid to devotion alongside of the Holy Scriptures.[1] If this advice be right, then it might be supposed that the religious life manifested in mysticism has peculiar strength and purity. Mysticism is undoubtedly a religious phenomenon of great excellence; yet it is a remarkable thing that in Rothe's judgement the Protestant Christian seeking religious culture must be referred to Roman Catholicism for examples of piety. The riddle is explicable when we study the aspirations of mysticism towards its goal, as described for example in the excellent treatise of S. Denifle.[2] No one who reads Denifle's description can deny that such mysticism is good Catholicism. It is true also that in its utterances we may see the richest conception of life combined with a strength and simplicity of language which must go to the heart of every pious man. It would be a bad sign if a Protestant could not use this book as an aid to devotion. A religious conception so exalted must powerfully affect every devout soul. Although we believe that our religion is of quite another sort, yet we must admit that we have not reached by a long way the perfection of culture which Roman Catholicism possesses in mysticism. But this is the only justification for Rothe's opinion. The mysticism which he commends is indeed of great value to us, yet not because it is an element in all religion, but because it is an admirably perfect expression of a particular kind of religion.

The speculations of Roman Catholic mysticism are of ancient date, and yet few of these are peculiar to itself. Nearly all belong to Neo-platonism. But its power to subject the personal life to observation and description exalt it to a height never yet attained by Protestantism. To the mystics of the fourteenth century the soul was a miracle which they could see; and they never grew

(1) Theologische Ethik, 2nd Edition, vol. iii, p. 490.

(2) "The Spiritual Life; or Flowers gathered from the Gardens of the German Mystics and 'Friends of God' of the 14th Century." Third Edition, 1880.

weary of gazing on it. They searched out and they set forth all the wealth of the inner life, so far as Roman Catholic piety could produce it. For this reason they are classical examples of Roman Catholic Christianity, and as such they have a lasting message for Christian life. If Roman Catholicism should succeed in getting back from the religious technicality of the Jesuits to the religious life of mysticism, we could only rejoice. But there is all the more reason that we should know whether we ought to take the same path.

The God of mysticism not one with Christ.

§9. The mysticism of all ages is intensely attractive, because in mysticism the universal aim of all religion is clearly grasped. In religion man seeks not simply God's gifts, but God Himself. What God can give without giving Himself does not comfort the soul; the soul never rests until it has pierced through all things else, and reached God Himself; a soul is free when it has risen above all that is not God. Every devout man knows the justice of these propositions. The theologian knows how often their truth has been forgotten in the search after worthy aids to religion. But if mysticism is genuine religion, when it soars thus above all aids that it may reach God Himself, the question still remains whether it seeks God as a Christian ought to seek Him, and whether the God whom mystics believe they find is the living God of our faith. The mystic seeks God in his own inner life. In this he is indeed not altogether wrong. For we never find God until He rules in our inner life. But the mystic infers from this that everything which affects us from without, cultus, doctrine, and our conception of the person of Jesus Himself, are all of them serviceable only as means to produce in us that frame of mind in which God comes inwardly near us. When this condition has been attained, then we may perceive the secret voice of God; which we may hear and know to be divine, but cannot repeat in words of ours. In such moments all that is from without recedes; when God speaks all else must be silent. The mystics knew well how to describe the freedom felt in the devout soul that is conscious it has passed through this incomparable experience. It is the joyful breathing

of a soul that knows it has the highest good within itself. The mystic is lifted above all that fetters men and brings unrest, for he knows he has found God. But for this very reason he has left Christ behind. According to mysticism, Christ leads the man who becomes His disciple up to the threshold of blessedness. But then the mystic steps across that threshold, and, at the highest point of life, he has no longer to do with Christ but with God, for when a man finds God, he finds himself alone with Him. When we observe this outcome in mysticism, we may be tempted to count it merely one of its casual, non-essential side growths. To do so, however, would be a mistake. The piety of the Roman Catholic is essentially such that, at the highest point to which it leads, Christ must vanish from the soul along with all else that is external. The Roman Catholic conception of Christ is of such a character that He whom it represents cannot possibly remain with a devout man who is in communion with his God. That is the reason above all others why Christian people must turn away from the path of Roman Catholic piety, which leads its eager spirits into mysticism.

Mysticism does not find God.

§10. Roman Catholic piety is unable to preserve a faith in the revelation of God in Christ which can definitely mould religious practice. So long as certain events in the experience of this or that individual soul are held to be the revelation wherein God manifests His presence to man, just so long is it meaningless to profess that God is present for us in Christ. We do not perceive the Redeemer who came to us in history in this or that emotion, concerning which all that can be said is that in that emotion God is touching the soul. God would be in such a case only a hidden, inscrutable power, and by no means that Will of Christ which we understand so well. If such were our relation to God and to Christ, then the Christian doctrines concerning these would exercise only a very slight influence on our religious practice, however zealously we might hold them. For it is not what we are taught concerning God that actually reveals Him, and enables us to recognise Him. We have God just in so far as He Himself comes near to us. If I say that in

my case God comes near me in a process which goes on within my soul, then this process is for me the form of God's appearance; and it is this that brings me all that I can grasp of God. But then, of course, that revelation in history, which took place, not specially for me, but for all the Church, loses hereby almost all its worth. The only use left for that revelation would be to instruct us and prepare each one for his individual experience of God's presence. And such mere preparatory matters might be forgotten, nay, ought to be forgotten, as soon as the great end itself had been attained.

Roman Catholicism and Christ.

§11. This corresponds exactly, on the other hand, to the conception of Christ which obtains in the Roman Catholic church. There the dogma of the two natures in Christ, and the doctrine of the redeeming work of the God-man, set forth what must be presupposed if the sinner is to be reconciled to God. Again, in the picture of the man Jesus, the Catholic Christian sees the way which is to lead him to God. And he is not altogether wrong, for it is only because we know Christ that we can have a God so holy that He at once strikes down the sinner, and yet also forgives him, and reconciles him to Himself by His own act. It is true also that we can only come to God by following Jesus, and by earnestly seeking to be truthful and upright like Jesus. But this is not enough. Christ is more to the Christian than all that. We do not merely come through Christ to God. It is truer to say that we find in God nothing but Christ.

God in Christ.

§12. All those beclouded conceptions of an Infinite Being in whom we cannot recognise the features of the inner life of Jesus, seek to describe, not the Living God of revelation, but only an unsubstantial shadow of nature, and the Christian should rise far above these. It is natural that the man who has not seen the revelation of God in Christ should be led through his hunger for the far-away God to a cultus like that of Roman Catholicism. Whenever he begins to see that he can have real knowledge of things and processes in nature only when he considers them in their relation to the Eternal, then along

with such thoughts will spring up a yearning after the God who is distinct from all the world; and unquestionably we are correct in saying "This is religious life," when we find a man conceiving that Eternal Something from which he cannot free his consciousness as a particular Being, and paying homage to it. This is the work of the religious instinct, which draws men out beyond the world toward God; and yet all that can be said of this God is that He is not the world. Now that is precisely all that mysticism has ever been able to say of God as it conceives Him. Plainly, the world and the conception of it are all that moves the soul while it thinks thus of God. Only disappointment can ensue to the soul whose yearning for God in such case keeps on insisting that God must be something utterly different from the world. If such a soul will reflect a while on the nature of the God thus reached, the fact must inevitably come to the surface that its whole consciousness is occupied with the world now as it was before, for evidently it has grasped no positive ideas – nothing but negative ideas—about anything else. Mysticism frequently passes into pantheism for this very reason, even in men of the highest religious energy; they refuse to be satisfied with the mere longing after God, or to remain on the way to Him, but determine to reach the goal itself, and rest with God Himself.

CHAPTER II.

MYSTICISM AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

Mysticism not Christian.

§1. The class of thought that sums up such religious experience is, of course, pantheism. But the whole thing is unchristian. The Christian gets a positive idea of God from the personal life of Jesus Christ. This idea does actually set us free from the world, because it leads us to deny self, and it is only when we are in this moral condition that we thoroughly understand the idea. We are guided, however, to this condition neither by the Church's dogmas concerning Christ, nor yet by using Jesus' human life as our example. We cannot enter into the same relation to God which Jesus had; that remains His own secret. But we never enter upon the relation to God into which the redemption of Christ brings us if, when we find God, we lose Jesus. It is just here that both the doctrine of the Church and the use of the life of Jesus as an example prove insufficient. For when once there awakes in a man that real religious need which will be satisfied with nothing but God alone, and the man has nothing more of Christ than these two, then he must leave Christ all behind. How can he stay with Christ if he looks upon Him as only a condition, the way and the means whereby to come to God? He must break through everything (even though it be adorned with the name of God like the Christ of ecclesiastical dogma), which serves only as a means, and is thus utterly different from the God whom we must find, and with whom alone we must be in our real religious life.

Here is the limit beyond which that conception of Christ does not rise which is embodied in the dogma and practice of Roman Catholicism; the Christ thus conceived cannot be taken in with the soul into the inmost experiences of the religious life. When this kind of Christianity attains its goal, although it is

borne and sustained through it out of a most truly religious need, it becomes non-Christian. The old dogma of the Deity of Christ was the expression of a faith that the Christian would find Christ at the very summit of his inner life in God. Therefore we hold that dogma in reverence. But because it can do nothing more than this for us, therefore we strive to go beyond it and reach a higher conception of Christ, and one which does not compel us to leave Him without when we are religious in earnest and reality, or, in other words, when the soul is in actual communion with God.

Does not the Church's dogma exalt Christ and the Trinity?

§2. The objection may be raised that it is just the Church dogma that exalts Christ and the Trinity. But in neither does it give us any pledge that when the Christian is at the highest point of his inner life, and is conscious that he is inwardly in the grasp of God, he will really find Christ in God. The Christian who is religiously alive will always treat the idea of the Trinity as we find Augustine did. The reflective process which is necessary to any clear grasp of the idea of the Trinity ceases altogether in the moments of such religious exaltation. Augustine wrote a work of fifteen books on the Trinity, yet, when he stood with his mother at the window of the house at Ostia, and sought to express the profound sense he felt of being in the grasp of God, he spoke not of the Trinity but of the one God, in whose presence the soul is lifted above itself and above all words and signs. A mystic who professes to hold the doctrine of the Trinity knows that all that can be said about it belongs to those words and signs which must shrink away back, along with the whole world, when God makes His presence felt. Dante thought, indeed, that in the moment of most exalted vision in Paradise he beheld three empty circles. This was his powerful expression for the thought that religious exaltation comes to its climax in the Ineffable. But this certainly does not prove that the doctrine of the Trinity will enable us to hold fast to the idea of Jesus in the midst of our actual communion with God. For an empty circle and the personal life of Christ are two things as different

as can be. The conception of the exalted Christ stands in a similar position with the doctrine just treated. That conception as it stands by no means guarantees that in our actual worship we shall be sure to combine the idea of Christ with that of God. It is possible, of course, that the conception may arise and be cherished in such a way that this necessary characteristic just mentioned may be preserved. But the exalted Christ may also be so conceived as to nourish only an empty play of fancy, and whenever this is the case, earnest piety will surrender itself to mysticism, and so press forward past such nonentities. But this mysticism will, at the same time, lead the soul away from Christ.

Mysticism and Church dogma are altogether unsatisfactory.

§3. The real facts of the case, then, are that ecclesiastical dogma and the piety which culminates in mysticism are intimately related the one to the other, and that the Christian Church can abide by neither. For she cannot allow herself to be placed permanently in a position where she must be separated from Christ if she is to be in true communion with God. We shall extricate ourselves from this position only when we get rid of the notion that the essence of religion, or what is common to all religions alike, is an excitement of the emotions which may well up out of the depths of any human soul, and which is to be regarded as indicating immediate possession by God. If this were true, then the really pious Christian would always be led to forget Christ altogether amid the wonders of such an experience. But it is not true. From the standpoint of a positive religion, all that can be admitted as common to all religions is that in every human consciousness the longing after God developes, if it is not forcibly suppressed. It is impossible, from such a standpoint, to proceed further and assert it to be the universal fact in all religions that every human consciousness, thanks to its natural equipment, is able to find the living God within itself. On the contrary, the Christian himself belongs to a historical movement in which he has discovered the revelation of God, wherein God actually comes to man, and in this historical connection alone can he

recognise the full reality of religion, and there only does his own soul come into contact with God. Probably mysticism will always arise as the very highest blossom of such religious development as may exist outside of Christianity; but the Christian must pronounce the mystic's experience of God to be a delusion. If he has learned how Christ alone has lifted him above all that he had ever been before, he cannot believe that another man might reach the same end by simply turning inward upon himself. Least of all will the Christian make the attempt to do so for himself; he could not free himself from that history in which he has recognised the revelation of God.

The historical standpoint alone stands all tests.

§4. If we take our stand thus within history, we may expect as a matter of course that those who are inclined to mysticism will think us narrow-minded. They cannot imagine how a man who yearns after what is eternal can hold fast to history. Our only answer now to this shall be to ask them how they are sure they are really aware of God Himself when they have those emotions in which their whole nature seems to be exalted. We meet their assertion with immoveable doubt. On the other hand, here is the reason why we are Christians: It is because, in the human Jesus, we have met with a fact whose content is incomparably richer than that of any feelings which arise within ourselves, a fact, moreover, which makes us so certain of God that, our reason and conscience being judges, our conviction is only confirmed that we are in communion with Him.

The need for a clearer understanding of the Christian's relation to God.

§5. Perhaps we may count upon the agreement of the majority of Protestant theologians with us in our exposition of mysticism as the perfection of Roman Catholic piety. In that case, they must be sensible of the need for as clear an understanding of the Protestant's true communion with God. Our church fellowship with each other rests upon our belief that, amid all other differences, the same divine power is leading us all to the same goal. This goal is not, indeed, the mystic's emotional experience, but it is certainly the communion of the soul with God. It must be the chief object

of our theological discussions to guide us to a clear understanding of what that communion ought to be.

What are revelation and doctrines of faith?

§6. We must regard that only as revelation which brings us into actual communion with God; and if we be asked what are the doctrines of our faith, we are bound to reply: only those truths which come home to us inevitably within the sphere of our actual communion with God. Thus all that can be the subject of Christian teaching is connected in the religious experience, and first gains satisfactory definition in that connection. But, on the other hand, we can describe as religious experience only that turning toward God which takes place under the influence of revelation and can be expressed in doctrines of faith. In observing this latter point we avoid the bye-path of mysticism. We quite recognise, in common with mysticism, that religious experience always culminates in the ineffable; but we maintain firmly also that the whole of the spiritual life must be based on the spiritual and definable power of the revelation of God, and, moreover, that the whole of this life consists of such spiritual processes as can be clearly expressed in doctrines of faith. We hold that the ineffable in religion can indeed be experienced, but only in connection with that which can be put into words. Apart from this the experience would not be quite certainly Christian, and we should not be sure of its truth.

Scholasticism and mysticism.

§7. Thus we escape mysticism without losing the truth which it contains. In rejecting mysticism we avoid scholasticism also. Many people find it difficult to free themselves from this Roman Catholic sort of theology, because they cannot make up their minds to be content with what is really given them as divine revelation. Vanity and the fear of men produce a constant tendency in us to regard as God's revelation, and as real doctrines of faith, things which we have simply taken from the confessions of other men. This was the mistaken practice of that Roman Catholic theology which is commonly called scholasticism, and it exercises a wide influence over the heart of Christendom. even where men have not so much

as heard the names of the schoolmen. The practice is not altered by altering particular doctrines, nor by choosing apostles instead of popes as the men whose confessions we appropriate. We remain amid scholasticism so long as we appropriate any other men's expressions of their redeemed life and fancy that by so doing we become exactly like those other men. Wherever men deal thus with other men's professions of faith, even if those other men be the apostles themselves, they stand on the same plane as Roman Catholics. Our aim should rather be to become such freemen as they were with whose professions we vainly deck ourselves. God alone can set the captives free. Theology should show us the way to Him. All the more, then, must she refuse to forge the fetters which human vanity so willingly binds about itself. On the contrary, she should rather teach us to throw away these sham jewels and riches, and to flee to the revelation which gives light even to our poverty and makes us rich and free. The most important task of theology is to open men's eyes, and lead them to see that nothing can be revelation to them which does not really lift them into communion with God.

The evils of systems of theology.

§8. One great hindrance on this true way of salvation is that system of the thoughts of various men which theology has constructed after the fashion of the schoolmen. Such a system is dangerous to begin with, because it claims to represent complete knowledge where in reality none of us can possibly know more than part. But it becomes a tempter to evil when it presses on us with the claim that it can help us if only we will surrender ourselves to its rule. We must reject this counterfeit wealth of theology, for it becomes an intolerable burden upon the earnest seeker after salvation. And we can do this by treating only of what is really the heart of religion, namely, by discussing revelation and the rise of the doctrines of faith in their divinely ordered and vital connection with the essence of religion. By this breach from scholasticism, we gain for theology the opposite result from that which our breaking loose from mysticism brings about for the inner life of the Christian. There is less theology; there is a richer life within.

The mistaken method of the elder Protestant theology.

§9. Our rejection of the practice of Roman Catholicism suggests the true course for the accomplishment of our task. Our object is to set forth the real communion of the Christian with God. The Christian is lifted into that communion when God turns to him and enters into communion with him; and then, as he becomes conscious of the new reality into which he has come, his life in fellowship with God unfolds itself in thought or doctrine concerning that reality. But now arises a still weightier objection to our undertaking, and to understand it we must bear in mind that our task stands in direct opposition to the aims and methods which were developed in the elder Protestant orthodoxy. The elder theologians believed their great task was to present in their logical connection those doctrines in which the classic witnesses to Christianity had expressed their faith. We go further back. For we desire to show how those doctrines of faith arise in the Christian soul that has entered into communion with God. The problem of theology as it was then conceived was manifestly insufficient, because it left quite untouched a question of the greatest practical importance.

Here is the question: when that "sum" of faith which is supposed to be necessary has been gathered from the Holy Scriptures, and has been logically arranged, and so set forth objectively, how is a man to make this his own subjective property?

Its result.

§10. No one has been able to solve this problem. In spite of the long discussions on the point in treatises on the so-called Plan of Salvation, the question remains unanswered. In fact, it was left with God, as a secret beyond our comprehension, to explain how the individual was to make that salvation his own which had been objectively set forth in these doctrines. It seemed best that it should so remain. For was there not danger in going further, and seeking to show, by a study of the processes of one's own consciousness, how salvation could be appropriated? Salvation had, of course, to be presented in a formal doctrine, which claimed to have

formulated the doctrines of faith as found in Holy Scripture. But the attempt to discover the processes within the soul whereby this matter became the possession of the individual, always led to an undesirable exaltation of the human activity as compared with the importance of the salvation objectively presented to him. Man was to appropriate the salvation which was set before him in the doctrines of faith. But how could he do so when these doctrines were quite strange to him and repelled him? If any one tried to show how salvation could thus be appropriated, it was evident that the unredeemed man had to be credited with the power to transplant himself into the new spiritual life. But what sort of a redemption is it when the man saves himself?

Such was the inevitable end of the attempt, under the conditions of the older theology, to understand the processes within the soul by which the individual appropriates salvation, or becomes redeemed; the very idea of redemption itself was in danger of being lost. We are not in this position. We do not admit that the doctrines of faith systematically formulated either do or can offer salvation to men. It is, in fact, a wrong done to the unredeemed man to offer him as his salvation a sum of doctrines or thoughts of which he is obliged to say that they are not his thoughts and cannot be so. The doctrines and thoughts of another man who is redeemed cannot redeem me. If I am to be saved, everything depends on my being transplanted into that inner condition of mind in which such thoughts begin to be generated in myself, and this happens only when God lifts us into communion with Himself. There we stand amid that truth which is absolutely closed to the unredeemed man. Then it becomes possible for us to recognise in the doctrines or thoughts set forth in Holy Scripture the free movements of that same spiritual life which has now begun in us also.

The value and joy of the Holy Scriptures.

§11. Of course we do not recognise these in everything that stands in the Bible, but this need not rob us of our peace. For the doctrines and thoughts of Scripture are not a lesson that we have to prepare as if for school. If they are taken in that sense, then they

belong to that "world" which the redeemed has to overcome. For him such external laws are to pass away. He finds another law binding upon him far more forcibly; it is written in his communion with the God who alone bestows and directs life. If the Christian has been really lifted into communion with God, then he is bound to enjoy the new life thus given him. To this he is assisted by the witness of all the redeemed and free life within the church of God, and that witness he finds in Scripture as nowhere else. A man learns how to see this glory of the sacred Scripture when there has begun in him the same life whose rise and whose perfection are there so incomparably described. Before that, the Bible is to him a book with seven seals; after that, he sees in it a means of the revelation of the grace and of the judgment of God. Before that, the thought that he is to treat the Bible otherwise than as he treats all other literature, is to him intolerable, or, at least, utterly strange. Afterwards he looks upon it as an actual miracle in history standing there before his eyes that, as he opens the Scriptures, he finds there a new world, a new home for the new personal life that has begun in himself, and which must begin in every man in the same way—a world whose revelations have become the abiding laws of his life. Thus our task is quite different from that of the elder theology, so far as that theology remains on Roman Catholic lines.

CHAPTER III.

OUR DIFFICULTIES.

Does our method lead after all to Mysticism?

§1. But our task also has its own peculiar difficulty. We have not to show how the unredeemed man is to become possessor of the ideas of the redeemed. But we are to show how he finds God and how he becomes thereby a new man. We are to bring into clear view a process which the elder theology has always suffered to remain veiled. But the objection may be raised at once that any such attempt will fall directly into the worst error of mysticism. For surely what Luther says about being a child of God holds good of the inner life of religion in every case. Luther says, "if thou truly feelest this in thy heart, it will be so great a thing to thee that thou wilt rather keep silence than say aught of it."[1] We must recognise the full importance of this objection.

The health of our religious life does indeed suffer injury if we attempt to tear away the last veil which hides it. Moreover, such an attempt never succeeds, for where religion is truly alive it is at bottom an ineffable mystery. But it is not our intention at all to express that which is not to be expressed. Mysticism has sought to do that; for our part we will not try. Indeed, we affirm, on the contrary, that one group of the doctrines of faith expresses this very consciousness that the Christian life contains depths which cannot be fathomed. Nevertheless, there is something we can say concerning the way in which man enters into communion with God. This process is certainly, on the one hand, an ineffable experience of the individual soul; but, on the other hand, it depends on the working of objective forces which are within the reach of all men. Our exposition concerns this latter subject.

(1) Erlangen Edition, vol. xi., p. 194.

The objective reality which must be studied.

§2. In taking this course we aim at understanding an objective reality, and so does the orthodox Protestant theology; we seem thus to be at one. But the objective reality of which we are thinking is something quite different from the reflections concerning faith which are formulated in the common doctrine. These thoughts have no power to generate the communion of the Christian with God; they are only the expression of that sense of new life which comes with such communion. It is possible to describe how the communion of the Christian with God is thus established, and how it unfolds itself in a continued renewal of the comprehension of what we are and what we shall be; this is possible without either ignoring or injuring the mystery of the inner life.

Is our method likely to be purely subjective?

§3. When we reject the theology whose dogmas are regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as the necessary counterpoise to mysticism, those who cling to such theology are apt to suppose that we are sure to fall into the same mistake as the mysticism which breaks away from all church limits. But we have no notion at all of resolving Christianity into mere subjective feeling. In our view the subjective vitality of Christianity ought to show itself in the energy with which it lays hold of and values what is objective, namely, in the first place, the power that can awaken and establish faith, and, in the second place, those thoughts and utterances in which faith makes itself known to believers. This is just the fault we have to find with mysticism, that it disregards the link between the inner life of the Christian and its real foundation, and also that it allows feelings which have no distinct character to usurp the place of thoughts concerning faith. That wealth of feeling which the Christian enjoys is not to be had without building on that foundation, nor without intimate relationship to those thoughts. If these be wanting, the most powerful emotions cannot enrich a man's life. They neither give him anything new nor do they lead him out from himself; they leave him to experience and to enjoy only what he has already possessed in his previous condition. But the man who is a Christian always strives to rise above himself;

he must always be looking for things to come. Mere emotion cannot raise us into a new life, for mere emotion leaves us alone with ourselves and with what we have already attained, and nothing more. So we shall find that the new state of feeling into which the Christian has entered always clings to something richer than itself, and which it distinguishes from its own nature: that is, it needs an objective reality. Greater and higher than all religious emotion within the Christian there rises and towers religious thought, which points, away beyond all that we have already felt and experienced, on to a boundless wealth that lies beyond.

Points of agreement with the elder theology.

§4. Thus, while we insist on freedom from mysticism, we are in agreement with the old theological procedure on the following points :—

1. The subjective experiences of the Christian religion cannot be severed from the objective forces which lead us into those experiences.

2. The subjective experience of the Christian religion cannot be severed from the thoughts which Christian doctrine seeks to formulate as the contents of faith. That experience does not end in mere feeling, but comes to its perfection in those thoughts.

3. These thoughts are much more than mere expressions of what we have already felt and enjoyed, for they express also what has been promised to us of God, who has taken possession of us and awakened our faith within us.

Points of dissent from the elder theology.

§5. But we depart also from the elder procedure and lay down the following propositions :—

1. The objective power which is the enduring basis of the religious experiences of a Christian is not any sum of thoughts concerning faith, however obtained, but it is the man Jesus.

2. The thoughts concerning faith arise within that communion with God into which Jesus lifts us.

3. It is not the possession of any sum of such thoughts, recorded though they may be in Holy Scripture, that makes a man a Christian; it is the power given him to produce such thoughts and to cherish them as the truth grasped by his own

consciousness. That power makes him a Christian, and that power is defined in the first proposition above.

Jesus, the only objective power; this alone is true Protestantism.

§6. Should an opponent appear now after all with the objection that we are resolving Christianity into the subjective, we can only suppose that for him Jesus is not objective. Let such a man only ask himself whether the person of Jesus in its unquestionable reality is not a firmer support for his inner life than any sum of prescribed doctrines—he may indeed profess such doctrines, but he cannot wholly fit his life into them, for the simple reason that God has not made him a parasite. That which determines our attitude is just the soul's craving after rest upon some undoubtedly objective reality, the need of knowing that we have submitted our religious life to some power which is altogether beyond any control by will or act of ours. It is a demand of God that comes home to us in this craving, and it must be obeyed. But the work to which God thus calls us does not mean that a break must be made with the past of the Christian community. It is precisely the vital instinct of Protestant Christianity that leads us to reject all authorities that would turn religion into a product of our own will; the Protestant instinct impels us to find that God who will have religion to be the product of His will in our hearts.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR RELATION TO LUTHER.

Luther's Protestantism observed our method.

§1. Thus Protestantism began in Luther as something quite new, and yet embracing all the best traditions of the venerable Christian community, and so it has remained in all its subsequent course so far as that course has not tended to defections and divisions. Exactly such is also our intention. In our description of the new life which is created in the Christian through the revelation of God, we shall let Luther be our guide. This of course does not imply that we shall here profess Luther's doctrine at every point. He lived in different conditions from ours, and therein he faithfully fulfilled his calling; but if we slavishly copied him, we should be unlike him.

Luther's doctrine of Scripture not necessarily perfect.

§2. To give only one illustration: Luther lived in an age when the authority of Holy Scripture as the Infallible Word of God and the authority of the dogma of the ancient church were unquestioned. And Luther shared in these views, these mental possessions of his time, more firmly than any other man. Hence he showed his religious energy in the very way in which he made use of these positions, then supposed to be impregnable, in order to clear the way to God for himself and others.[1] Had he not done so, he would not have been loyal to the faith which aims at the one thing only, namely, to find God. Now Luther's theology was built up of efforts to combine his new comprehension of Christianity with those Roman Catholic assumptions; while in reality they had nothing to do with each other. His new comprehension of Christianity was not brought about by regarding the sacred Scriptures as an inspired law book, whose words we must follow without question even where we do not understand them. Luther would never have gained that new comprehension simply from his reading of the sacred Scriptures.

(1) Compare Harnack, Text-book of the History of Dogma, iii., 695.

He found it, rather, amid the inner battles of a soul that could find no rest in any means of grace, because it sought the God of grace Himself, and amid such struggle he discovered records in the sacred Scriptures of what that is that can redeem a man. But he went on from the comfort that he found in his agreement with the Christianity of the New Testament, and came to place reliance on an obedience to the Scripture as a sort of law. In this, of course, he and his Roman Catholic opponents were at one. In consequence of this he imported into his doctrine much that he had neither understood as God's revelation nor had come to possess as the result of thoughts concerning his own faith.

Luther's acceptance of Catholic dogma not necessarily right.

§3. Similarly, Luther shared the Roman Catholic position with regard to the dogma of the elder church. He knew no more than any other man of his time what had been the original meaning of that dogma, and he believed firmly, like everybody else, that reverence was due to the sacred relic of the past. But while it remained for others at best a mysterious relic, Luther made of it a vessel for carrying that conception of Christianity in which his faith lived. So he had at once a far deeper relationship to the old dogma, and a stronger sense of the paramount importance of his great cause. Dogma was simply a dead weight to his opponents, but to him it was alive again with religious significance, and became an important element in the life of faith. He could not doubt that he had thus entered again into the piety of the fathers, and so it is correct to say that the dogma of the elder church was among the sources which contributed to Luther's power. But that comprehension of the Gospel which made him a Protestant and a Reformer sprang in reality as little from the dogma of the old church as it did from his reverence for the inspired word of Scripture as a sort of law.

Luther's Christianity *v.* Luther's theology.

§4. If, then, Luther is to be our guide we must distinguish between Luther's Christianity and Luther's theology; for the latter is built upon the assumptions of Roman Catholicism. This distinction is imperative. That teaching of Luther to which we will and can hold is his prophetic word, in which he expresses what he has experienced of the

revelation of God as his redemption. That part of his teaching to which we could not hold even if we would, is no expression of his religious experience, but it is his earnest endeavour, in a way which cannot be too highly praised, to find a right place and a real usefulness for certain traditional and other unquestioned opinions amid the new conceptions of Christianity which he had gained. No one can now maintain that part of Luther's teaching in the same way as he maintained it. For what at that time held good without even being questioned, and could therefore be used as a reliable means of assistance, stands no longer unquestioned. The chariot on which Luther's Christianity made its entrance into the Church has become feeble and broken. If it is nevertheless to be preserved, it certainly cannot serve any longer as a safe means of conveyance, but is at best a highly honoured burden.

The danger if reaction be demanded touching Scripture.

§5. The theologians who should refuse to make this distinction, and who should demand that we teach Luther's doctrine in its entirety, could not bring about in any complete sense now a reverence for Holy Scripture as a law book. They certainly could not assume that such reverence is an element in the spiritual life of those who claim to be Christians. Luther could freely assume and build upon many things which it must cost those theologians great trouble even to try to hold together, and no one is confident that he could accomplish the task. No one can still hold to the idea that all words of Scripture being the word of God are infallible expressions of the truth.[1] But without this idea, any intention to reverence the word of Scripture as if it were a law, even where one does not view it as an expression of the truth, collapses and fails to abide in the soul. Of this every one is sensible whose religion has cost him any mental labour at all. Wherever such an one attempts to copy the theology of Luther he suffers a most painful discomfort, which is the very opposite of what Luther felt in view of his system.

The similar danger touching dogma.

§6. The same is to be said of the other Roman Catholic element in Luther's theology, namely, his reverence for dogma. It is true that the same reverence

(1) Compare Dieckhoff, Die Inspiration und Irrtumslosigkeit der heiligen Schrift, 1891, pp. 59-97.

is still widely spread among Protestants along with the mistaken conception of the Scriptures as an infallible law; but it is no longer a sure, unassailable assumption, as it was to Luther. We can no longer start from this assumption, as Luther did, when we talk with a man whom we seek to lead to Christianity. Nor, again, can we still declare with Luther that we will not argue with a man who does not admit the infallibility of the Scriptures or does not accept the Nicene Creed. If we were to do so, we should be not merely uncharitable, but untruthful. We theologians are shut out from the position of simple reverence for dogma because we have set about investigating the sources of it, and this is only the very least that can be said. Historical study of the growth of any human ideas always tends to liberate men from subjection to those ideas. And so, by the effect of such study, that which held good without question for Luther and the men of his time, in respect both of dogma and of the infallibility of Scripture, has become problematical for us and our contemporaries. Therefore, to weave these two elements into Christian preaching now would have quite the contrary effect to that which they exerted at the time of Luther; what then produced certainty can now only produce uneasiness if the same claim be made for it.

Conservative theologians will admit this.

§7. This must be admitted even by those theologians who are confident that with special skill they can still show valid grounds for reasserting the elder church dogma, and for reverencing the Scriptures as a law. For evidently our contemporaries are conscious that these things no longer form a firm background whereon one can reckon in Christian preaching. Conservative theologians may regard this state of affairs as a terrible declension, in which they themselves more or less have a share; but, in any case, they are called upon to help their strayed and homeless fellow-men to the right way. This they can no longer do by means of those assumptions which Luther made, because the men whom they are to help, as a matter of fact, no longer accept those assumptions. Of course they can turn their endeavours towards bringing men back again to the acceptance of those assumptions, and that is

probably the intention of many. But they will make no serious attempt to do this, and simply for this reason: that they have quite enough trouble to stay themselves where they would fain see others. Now, is the preaching of the Gospel to cease until such an attempt succeeds, or shall it go forward in the form of instruction based upon assumptions, which, as a matter of fact, are no longer accepted? The first course is impossible, and the second, while it is indeed pursued, is of little use.

There may always be men among us who think they can maintain the Roman Catholic position towards the sacred Scriptures as an infallible law, and towards the elder ecclesiastical dogma, and it is bootless to argue whether it is possible to hold that position in earnest; but even such men must, in any case, admit that no one can bring the Gospel home to the men of our time as good tidings, or as a convincing word of God, if he speaks to them from that standpoint. When such, then, is the case, we must all be equally interested in the effort to free the Gospel from the obstacles which Luther's theology laid in its way.

The real relation to Luther.

§8. I believe that this is possible if we put Luther's system of theology aside as a work accomplished for his own age, and proceed to enquire what was that communion into which he knew himself delivered through Christ. Luther often spoke of this without using any of the language of Roman Catholic theology. It may, perhaps, help those who can no longer accept his theology because they do not share its presuppositions, if we describe those experiences which Luther had of the Redeemer. And this is the more to be expected because, in his testimony concerning the one thing needful, Luther repudiates entirely the demand that, in order to become a Christian, one must begin by clear submission to some kind of prescribed doctrine. Luther certainly regarded as self-evident certain opinions which we cannot make our own, or could accept only with great difficulty. But he never demanded submission to prescribed doctrines as an essential part of what is strictly religious experience. Instead of holding such a submission to be a means of salvation, he pronounced it to be a sin. Since he

thought that the way to salvation in Christ did not lie through any such performance, it is to be hoped that his weighty testimony will help the upright souls to-day who, even for the hope of bliss, would not stain themselves by professing to have certain ideas to which in reality they are strangers. We shall therefore confine ourselves to those of Luther's writings in which he is occupied far more with the positive description of the Christian life than with polemical consideration of limitations laid upon that life by the Church. In these we shall find a Luther who is at one with himself. Of Luther the theologian we cannot say as much. How often, for example, did his views change on the doctrine of the Lord's supper! But whether we turn to his discourse of the year 1518 on Repentance, or to the sermons of the last years of his life, we find everywhere the same pourtrayal of the new life awakened in him by God, in the strength of which he could say of himself, "My spirit is too glad and too great for me to be at heart an enemy to any man."[1] Luther's witness to that which makes a Christian to be a Christian is a treasure not yet sufficiently valued, and it is incomparably more precious than his theology. The latter has had its day. Only those who are as simple-hearted and as unconscious heirs of Roman Catholic theology as Luther was could thoroughly enter into it; of such persons there cannot be many now. But, on the other hand, it will quicken and help forward, and perhaps bring deliverance to any man in whom the yearning for God is not dead, to see how Luther came to that communion with God which gave him a joyful heart and a courage which was unconquerable.

(1) Erlangen Edition, xxiv., 16.

BOOK II.

GOD'S COMMUNION WITH US.

CHAPTER I.

GOD COMMUNES WITH US THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

God does not commune with us through mere grasp of the idea of the eternal.

§1. We may speak of having communion with God only when we are certain that God speaks clearly to us, and also hears and considers our speech in His operations. Far be it from us to deprecate that sense of possession by the idea of the eternal which ennobles scientific enquiry even in the case of men who are not conscious of the connection of their life with Christ. That is a kind of religion, and it affords us a proof that God knows how to find His way even into the inner life of a man who will not take to heart his position in the history of mankind, and who therefore does not appreciate to the full the reality in which he has been placed for God's great ends. But we deny that this is Christian religion, and we refuse also to make the admission which some make only too readily, that it is the essential thing in all religion, and therefore the universal starting point from which we may gain an insight into any particular religion. We do not recognise in that experience the first awakening quiver of religion in general, but only a kind of religion, and one which must be estimated as of inferior worth if we view it from the standpoint of Christian faith. We must regard it thus because it brings no real communion with God. For a Deity such as we might conceive by thinking solely of the idea of the eternal would indeed impress men with a sense of His power and dignity; but He would also hold us at a distance, and abandon us to the feeling of our utter insignificance, by showing us the vanity of all the affairs of human life. In comparison with what Christianity gives, the life would be but a stunted thing which should remain under the ban of such a feeling of insignificance. But if, on the other hand, we are certain of God's sympathy with us, and believe we have a real communion with Him, then we must make quite sure what are the visible

tokens of such sympathy, and must ask what must happen on our part so that we may enjoy this communion with God which He offers us.

Nor through a set of doctrines which are first to be believed.

§2. In order to commune with us, God makes Himself known to us. The God of whose communion with men the Sacred Scripture tells, does not, for His own holiness' sake, suffer men to reach Him through any efforts of their own. He will vouchsafe this in one way alone, and that way he opens to us Himself. Now, further, if it is impossible for a man to rise unaided above all fightings and doubts into the realm of real communion with God, it is equally certain that no mere information of any kind concerning God could thus raise a man, even although that information should claim to be a divine revelation. We might indeed form a conception of God on the ground of such information. We might even consent to acknowledge the reality of that revelation, and we might therefore believe our conception of God to be correct. But in that case we should still have to win for ourselves the impression that the God thus revealed did actually commune with us. If we had received only information concerning God, it would still be left to us to obtain the certainty of a real communion of God with ourselves. And no such endeavour of ours could ever conquer doubt, for it is just amid such endeavours that doubt does always rise. Information, therefore, concerning God, although it may claim to be of divine revelation, can only bring that troubled piety which lives by no delivering act of God, but by men's own exertions. God has left us in no such miserable condition, and Protestants, at least, may know this, if they will only refuse to be led aside from the one thing needful by the common cries like these following:—"You must believe that God made the world; that men sprang from a single pair; that God's Son became a man; that God's demand for the punishment of the guilty has been satisfied by the death of His Son; and finally that all this happened for your sake." He who determines so to believe, can only cause trouble within himself. The man who sets about it seriously, will soon discover that nothing comes of

all his exertions, and the man who lacks earnest devotion to truth, and yet persuades himself that his determination to believe thus will create such a belief in his mind, is sure to fall in to the delusion that his easy-going carelessness is a good work whereby he becomes well pleasing to God. This will be his punishment. It is therefore a matter of urgent necessity that we should defend ourselves against these demands. To keep their importunity in check, however, is not a difficult task when we remember another demand which is certainly no less imperative, namely, that we ought to be certain of what we believe. This certainty cannot be established by any resolve of our own, nor will it be infused into us by some helpful power if we will only first make this resolve and then wait for the help to come. It arises in us when we come into contact with that reality which overpowers our inmost soul. Then, when we are thoroughly convinced that only a faith that has arisen thus is a living faith, the demand that we shall believe those doctrines need not trouble us any more; we can quietly disregard it. In such doctrines, however true they may be in themselves, we are not brought face to face with that reality which gives faith its certainty; but they simply tells us something, and we are then expected by our own efforts to hold that information to be true. A faith gained thus would not have grown, but would have been manufactured. But we leave all these fruitless endeavours at religious self-help behind, when we reject the idea that we are to believe certain doctrines, and simply ask instead: "Whereby shall we know that a living God is communing with us?" Then, when we come to see and understand the reality which makes us certain of this fact, we see also that the painful effort which had been demanded of us is taken away by God's own act, and when the Christian has once experienced the fact that God is striving to make Himself known to him, and when He sees how God so strives, then he begins to see also what is true in those aforesaid doctrines.

God communes with us through a fact.

§3. God makes Himself known to us, so that we may recognise Him, through *a fact*, on the strength of which we can believe on Him. No doctrine of any kind can do more than tell us how we ought to conceive

of God. No doctrine can bring it about that there shall arise in our hearts the full certainty that God actually exists for us; only a fact can inspire such confidence within us. Now we Christians hold that we know only one fact in the whole world which can give us that confidence, namely, the appearance of Jesus in history, the story of which appearance has been preserved for us in the New Testament. Our certainty of God has its root in the fact that within the realm of history to which we ourselves belong, we encounter the man Jesus as an undoubted reality. Inasmuch as Jesus raises us into fellowship with God, He is to us the Christ. The true Christian confession is that Jesus is the Christ. Rightly understood, however, it means nothing else than this: that through the man Jesus we are first lifted into fellowship with God. If it be asked what we are to understand by that, the reply is: that for those who truly seek God it should be a very simple matter. Jesus Himself must have intended it to be so, for He claimed that He brought glad tidings even to the poor.

This simple matter is often obscured.

§4. But this simple matter is often made difficult by those thieves amid Christendom (John x., i), who pretend to come into fellowship with God by some other way than through the man Jesus. The by-path most frequented is that of doctrines concerning Jesus which give Him the highest praise, and so form the most convenient means of avoiding His Person. By this means the only way of salvation is closed to persons without number. The divinely simple fact that the man Jesus is the Christ is made distasteful to them by the idea infused into them that they may come into possession of much higher things, namely, a number of wonderful doctrines, the *fides quae creditur*,[1] by simply believing these. The result is that even among us Protestants it has become very difficult for the majority to regard the finding of God as the highest good, or even to look upon it as a wonderful gift from Him at all. Most men think it of small importance that Jesus alone makes us certain of a living God, for they imagine that of all the doctrines in which they "believe" the doctrine of the existence of God is the most elementary.

(1) "The faith which is commonly held." Tr.

Our idea of God and of communion with Him does not depend upon a general induction from the ideas of all sorts of men.

§5. From this there has arisen a bad practice now widely spread among us. When the question is asked, "On what does our certainty of God depend?"—that is to say, our certainty of the Living God who works in us—it is quite a common practice to look away from ourselves and our own particular position, and to think of as many men as possible, who stand at the greatest possible distance from us, such as the savages of New Holland or the ancient Egyptians. None of these, it is urged, have been utterly without the capacity for recognising God, as indeed the apostle Paul testifies. We are also further reminded that Israel had the knowledge of God and enjoyed communion with Him before Christ came, and therefore it is finally concluded that what was possible to the Jews must also be possible to us. Such argumentation is frequently set up in contradiction of our proposition that for us Jesus is the revelation of God. And then that proposition of ours looks like an exaggeration. It seems as though, in order to reduce it to its right proportions, we ought rather to say that we may have the revelation of the being of God quite apart from Jesus, but that Jesus makes some addition to that revelation, to wit, He lets us know that God has a Son who is of one nature with Himself.

Now to all this we may reply that we by no means wish to assert, even for a moment, that the savages of New Holland have no knowledge of God, no pulsations of true religion, and therefore no communion with God. But we do not know through what medium such knowledge and such communion reach them. We cannot enter fully into the religious life even of a pious Israelite. Israel stood in communion with God as His people; hence national feeling was an indispensable element in Jewish piety, and just because the Israelite knew what it meant to belong to Israel instead of to any other nation, he was able to grasp as revelations of God those features in the course of Hebrew history which he did so apprehend. Since we cannot enter thus into the feelings of the Jews, the revelation which was given to Israel can no longer satisfy our need.

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Our position is different; we stand in such historical relationships that Jesus Christ alone can be grasped by us as the fact in which God reveals Himself to us and comes into communion with us. The knowledge of God and the religion which have been and which are possible to men placed in other historical conditions are impossible to us. Indeed, there exists in our case a hindrance to the religious life of which men were quite ignorant in olden times, namely, that deepening of the moral consciousness which has come about, and the consequent moral need. We feel ourselves to be separated from God, and consequently that our faith is paralysed by matters which troubled the ancients very little. We cannot go back to simple indifference to a moral demand after our conscience has once been awakened to it. Hence we need a different revelation of God from that which was given to the ancients. We can only become certain of a God who forgives our sins and turns our moral impotence into moral strength. This is what is vouchsafed to us in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. He gives a fulness to our personal life which makes all other forms of religion useless, and which allows us to find rest alone in that communion with God into which He brings us.

Our own position in history must be taken into account.

§6. If we wish to come to God, we must not, above all things, turn our back upon the actual relationships in which we stand. The concrete reality amid which we actually live must be the nourishment of our inner life. When we take this reality to heart, then God enters our life, for the earth is the Lord's. Dreams which soar away from reality lead not to God but to nothing. They are a form of original sin, a form of untruth in which we spin a web of emptiness about ourselves, and so cut ourselves off from true life. That is the truth after which honest thinkers have striven with the sweat of their brows, as they have tried to discover for human reason the work and rule of the Creator as actually manifest in the reality of nature. Those attempts belong, however, to a period of Christian life that has now been outlived. We do not apprehend ourselves as what we really are when we conceive

ourselves as part of nature, for we have become conscious that our realm of life is human society and its history. Nature alone cannot show us all the reality in which we stand, although she belongs to that reality, being herself a means to the existence of society; but it is in this society itself, this historical life, of which nature is thus a subordinate part and means, that we first reach the true reality, of which we must become conscious if our inner life is to have any fulness at all. For this reason we can no longer hope to find God by seeking Him in nature. God is hidden from us in nature because we do not find our whole selves there, we do not find there the full riches of that reality, which crowds in upon our consciousness. It is only out of life in history that God can come to meet us. In proportion as what is essential in our historical environment becomes an element of our consciousness are we led into the presence of those facts which can reveal God to us. If our souls do not awake to a clear consciousness of these facts, if we simply endure our relationship to other men, instead of entering into it and enjoying it, then the personality within us to which God desires to reveal Himself remains dormant, and we do not see the facts through which alone God can reveal Himself to us. Hence the Christian religion is inseparable from those moral activities in which we become conscious of personal fellowship and its laws, and take our part in the same. It is only when we share these moral activities that we first begin to live in that world in which we can become aware of our God.

Two classes of objectors.

§7. In that historical environment which ought to give our personal life its fulness, there is no fact more important for each individual than Jesus Christ. To overlook Him is to deceive ourselves as to the best treasure which our own life possesses. For He is precisely that fact which can make us certain, or which can make us see it to be a reality that God communes with us. This assertion will no doubt give to many the impression of a manifest exaggeration. All who are accustomed to follow the orthodox method of teaching will esteem it such, and so will those who think along rationalistic lines. The former think they find the support of their religious life in doctrines

concerning God and Christ which are vouched for by others; the latter are unwilling to stake their peace of mind either upon authorities or upon past events in history, but they desire to base it upon that eternal truth which they grasp in their own thinking here and now. Both classes must find a stumbling block in our proposition that the person of Jesus is the fact by which God communes with us. Both are inclined to imagine that the communion with God of which we speak is an inward experience into which external facts do not intrude. The objections they raise against our proposition are, first, that the person of Jesus is a fact vouched for by authorities, and, secondly, that it is a thing of the past. They hold that the first objection forbids us to say with truth that Jesus Himself is actually an element in our environment, they hold that such can only be said of the tradition concerning His life. They contend that the second objection above forbids us to say that God communes with us by this fact, *i.e.*, the person of Jesus, because that fact is a thing of the past, whereas God's communion with us must take place in the present. This latter contention has been specially emphasised by Luthardt;[1] but it is evident that it will also be raised by every devout rationalist and by every earnest mystic.

Is the first objection valid?

§8. Let us consider the former contention which has the greater weight. Men must indeed be powerfully moved by the supposition that Jesus Himself cannot be held to be an undeniable element in our actual environment, and that it is only the story of Jesus, as vouched for by others, that can be called such an element. Many within the Christian fellowship find this supposition to be a very slave-chain, and for many outside that fellowship it is a drag holding them back from entering. But are the chains so adamantine as they seem? If not, then we, too, can overcome a serious hindrance which the faith of the Reformers overcame.

It is true that we should have no certain knowledge of Jesus if the New Testament did not tell us about him. Narratives by others contribute in all cases not a little to the picture we form

(1) See my treatise on "The Certainty of Faith and the Freedom of Theology," 2nd edition, 1889, p. 75. Luthardt says, against the inclusion of the past in the present religious experience, "How can what is preterite be what is present?"

for ourselves of historical reality. If tradition of some sort did not show us what others have experienced of human life we should lack the most valuable of those interchanges of experiences made possible by such tradition. But given this exchange, then the narrative which comes to us, either by word of mouth or in writing, is not the only fact which we incorporate into our picture of historical reality; the contents of those narratives may also become a fact for us. But now, how so?

Analysis of the relation of story to fact. (i.) The effect of confidence in the narrator.

§9. This happens only when we can ourselves establish its reality, and we may do this in various ways. The most elementary form of doing so consists in extending the confidence we place in the trustworthiness of the narrator to that which he narrates. This constantly happens in our daily life, whenever we base our plans of action upon information given by others. In this case our mental activity is extremely small, and hence we can remain in this attitude only so long as we are concerned with matters of minor importance. But as soon as the contents of the information affect seriously the most important interests of life, our trust in the mental power and moral goodness of the narrator no longer suffices to assure us that what he reports is a fact beyond all doubt. If even in such a case we are compelled to take action in reliance on the report, our action takes the character of a venture. We are often obliged to act thus when the pressure of necessity does not permit of inaction; under such compulsion we may find ourselves obliged to treat the contents of the narrative as fact. But it is obvious that no such compulsion exists when the information received in any way concerns our religious faith. If we do put confidence in the trustworthiness of a narrator, and are thus led to receive his narration as a fact among the subjects of our religious thought, then, whether the confidence be really felt or be only arbitrarily assumed, it is always very certain that the matter reported is nothing that affects the vital interests of religion. An illustration of this may be seen in Roman Catholicism. The historical appearance of Jesus is there really accepted on the authority of the narrators, and so we find that that appearance has nothing to do with the

highest concern of religious life, namely, how a man is to find God. It serves as a stimulus to the imagination, as an example and as a symbol, but it is not to the Roman Catholic the great fact in which he sees God entering into his own life and revealing Himself to him. Wherever we find the proclamation of the appearance of Jesus thus based entirely on the authority of the narrators, it will also be observed that the Person of Jesus is put on one side so soon as the deepest religious interest comes forward for consideration. A believer cannot base his very existence entirely on what may be given him by other men.

Analysis continued. Fact *v.* Report. (ii.) Careful critical estimate of reports.

§10. Our mental activity in the matter of receiving reports is certainly greater when we do not form our conception of the actual event from the narrative alone, but seek to obtain it by a combination of the narrative with something else which we know to be real. This procedure is frequently exemplified in daily life, and it has been developed into an art in historical criticism. The contents of the narrative are viewed in the light of the evident character of the narrator as seen through his writings, the position he occupied and its impress on him, and the culture of his age which influenced his way of looking at things. From a consideration of these circumstances we decide how far the contents of the story may be incorporated into our picture of what actually happened. But the decision thus reached of necessity lays claim to nothing more than probability. We are always prepared to modify our results upon more exact examination of the narrative or upon the discovery of new information. It is obvious, then, that such decisions do not give us facts on which our religious faith could be based. Hence it is quite explicable why historical criticism of the sacred records is so much disliked in many quarters. If men will imagine that the reliability of the sacred records is the proper ground of religious faith, then they must necessarily be rendered in the highest degree uneasy by faithful attempts to estimate the historical probability of what is narrated in those records. We have no such anxiety; on the contrary, we declare that if there be any statement as to the historical appearance of Jesus which must be

submitted to this procedure, and concerning which we can establish only what is probably the actual fact, then that statement cannot be a basis of faith. It is only a part of that world with which faith is to wrestle, and which faith must overcome.

Analysis continued. Narrative *v.* Historical Reality. (iii.) Even the historian's certainty is an insufficient basis for religious life.

§11. At this point, of course, the question arises whether it is at all possible to bring a historical phenomenon, of which we learn in the first instance from the story of the past, out of this mist of probability.

It may be said that we learn with certainty that Jesus lived from the fact of the existence of His church and its historical significance. These leave no room to deny that fact, or, furthermore, to deny the correctness of certain features in that portrait of Jesus which his followers have preserved in the records of the New Testament. This is quite true even from the simply historical point of view. A historian may indeed doubt much that the New Testament tells us concerning the glory of Jesus, because it is possible to attribute it to the transfiguring enthusiasm of His disciples; but the correctness of His portrait in the features alluded to must be admitted by everyone who is not prepared to adopt the absurd supposition that in the case of a man who has exerted the greatest influence on history all traces of His earthly life have disappeared. On the strength of those elements in Jesus which beyond all doubt are with us to-day, every reasonable man will hold the more general features of the common story of His life to be correct. Those features, of course, cannot be decisive as to the right or wrong of placing faith in Him; perhaps they might belong to a visionary as well as to the Redeemer.

Now, so far as we have already gone, some one might hold in theory indeed that we have only succeeded in establishing the probability of those facts concerning Jesus; none the less in practice, even if our interest in Jesus be only historical, we do all include His picture with its well known features as a part of the historical reality amid which we live, and here we are evidently in no way dependent upon the authority of the chroniclers who give us those features of the life of Jesus. On

the contrary, the decision which we reach that these things are facts, proceeds from our own independent activity, and is based upon that which we regard as real at present rather than on any decisions of historical criticism. We have then so far an illustration of our ability to detach the contents of a narrative both from the narrative itself and from its author, and to regard this as an element of the reality to which we have to adjust our lives. Yet this helps us little. The historian may succeed thus in removing doubts as tc the historical reality of some person long since dead ; but if he seeks to base his faith upon this, all the result of his argumentation collapses immediately. And then grows doubt, which perhaps the mere historian can afford to disregard. Even to him it appears once more to be a disadvantage that no historical judgment, however certain it may appear, ever attains anything more than probability. But what sort of a religion would that be which accepted a basis for its convictions with the consciousness that it was only probably safe? For this reason it is impossible to attach religious conviction to a mere historical decision.

Analysis continued: Narrative *v.* Reality (iv.) All these results insufficient as a basis for religion.

§12. If, notwithstanding all this, the person of Jesus is so certainly a fact to us Christians that we do see in Him the basis of our faith, and the present revelation of God to us, then our conviction has nothing to do with the judgment of the historian. The calmness with which Christendom holds by the historical reality of Jesus has certainly not been won by the forcible suppression of historical doubt. Any such effort would be made contrary to the dictates of conscience, and it could give no man peace. It is something quite different which removes all doubt from the picture of Jesus ; if we have that picture at all, we have it as the result, not of our own efforts, but of the power of Jesus Himself.

The actual basis ; the picture of Jesus' inner life ; how known.

§13. In the Christian fellowship we are made acquainted, not merely with the external framework of Jesus' course amid the fates of life and of His work and history, but we are also led into His

presence and receive a picture of His inner life. For this we are certainly dependent in the first instance, upon other men. For the picture of Jesus' inner life could be preserved only by those who had experienced the emancipating influence of that fact upon themselves. The personality of Jesus remained hidden from all others; it could only reveal itself to such as were lifted by it. Hence the picture of his inner life could be preserved in His church or "fellowship" alone. But, further, this picture so preserved can be understood only when we meet with men on whom it has wrought its effect. We need communion with Christians in order that, from the picture of Jesus which His Brotherhood has preserved, there may shine forth that inner life which is the real heart of it. It is only when we see its effects that our eyes are opened to its reality so that we may thereby experience the same effect. Thus we never apprehend the most important element in the historical appearance of Jesus until His people make us feel it. The testimony of the New Testament concerning Jesus is the work of His church, and its exposition is the work of the church, through the life which that church develops and gains for itself out of this treasure which it posseses. Something similar is the case with every personality; you must stand within the sphere of life which it created or influenced in order to be able to understand its innermost reality. So if we would understand what is most important in history, we must look not only to the records but also to the men whose actual present life expounds those records to us.

How certainty of this becomes absolutely ours.

§14. What we are thus seeking is certainly the hardest part to grasp in the whole sum of the historical reality of Jesus; nevertheless it is just this which sets us free from the mere record, because it presses in upon us as a power that is present through its work upon us. He who has found the inner life of Jesus through the mediation of others, in so far as he has really found it, has become free even of that mediation. He is so set free by the significance which the inner life of the man Jesus has for him who has beheld it. If we have experienced His power over us, we need no longer look for the

testimony of others to enable us to hold fast to His life as a real thing. We start indeed from the records, but we do not grasp the fact they bring us until the enrichment of our inner life makes us aware that we have touched the Living One. This holds true of every historical personality; the inner contents of any such personality are laid open only to those who become personally alive to it, and feel themselves aroused and helped onward by its contact. The picture of a personality becomes visible to us in this way, and cannot be handed over to us by any communication from others; it must arise within ourselves as the revelation of the living to the living. It is thus, therefore, that the inner life of Jesus may become a reality to ourselves, and the man who has experienced that will certainly no longer say that, strictly speaking, he can know only the story of Jesus as a real thing. Jesus becomes a real power to us when He reveals His inner life to us; a power which we recognise as the best thing our life contains. Any conscientious reader of the gospels will be constantly questioning whether the events actually happened as they stand in the narrative. Of course we can forcibly suppress this doubt, and many a Christian will think it an inevitable necessity to do so. But such suppression will not help him. Help lies for each of us, not in what we make of the story, but in what the contents of the story make of us. And the one thing which the gospels will give us as an overpowering reality which allows no doubt is just the most tender part of all: it is the inner life of Jesus itself. Only he who yearns after an honest fulness for his own inner life can perceive the strength and fulness of that soul of Jesus, and whenever we come to see the Person of Jesus, then, under the impress of that inner life breaking through all the veils of the story, we ask no more questions as to the trustworthiness of the Evangelists. The question whether the portrait of Jesus belongs to history or fiction is silenced in every one who learns to see it at all, for by its help he first learns to see what is the true reality of personal life. We may perhaps take the view that the historical portrait of Jesus was constructed in good part by men who were able, like ourselves, to fashion visible symbols of religious and moral ideas, and if we look at it thus we shall feel we are superior to those narrators, for what we can thus explain

does not enrich us, but shows us what we already possess. But we cannot think thus of the great picture of Jesus' inner life, for it not merely compels our reverence, but also makes good the wonderful claim He made as the Messiah. The impression comes over us and returns upon us again and again that He was able to remain always in that state of soul which we count blessed, and so that He stood alone over against humanity amid all its need.

The value of historical study of records.

§15. The man who has had this experience can with heartfelt confidence allow the historical criticism of the New Testament writings to have full play. If such investigation discovers contradictions and imperfections in the story, it also discloses by that very fact the power of the personality of Jesus, for that personality never lets the contradictions and imperfections of the story disfigure the clear features of that which it gave to men, namely, Jesus' own inner life. It is a fatal error to attempt to establish the basis of faith by means of historical investigation. The basis of faith must be something fixed; the results of historical study are continually changing. The basis of our faith must be grasped in like independent fashion by learned and unlearned, by each for himself. Howsoever the story may come to us, whether as sifted and estimated by historical criticism or not, the same results ought to follow and may follow in both cases, namely, that we learn to see in it the inner life of Jesus. Whether faith then arises in us or not depends on whether this personal spirit wins power over us, or we hold ourselves back from Him. So far as establishing our faith is concerned, historical work on the New Testament can bring us no nearer. The inner life of Jesus is stamped on the testimony of men who have been set free by Him. In this way has it become a force in history, and in no other way was that possible. Hence we can lay hold on it and make it ours only when we let the witness of His disciples lay hold on us. The man who desires to possess it by any other means only shows thereby his desire to possess Christianity without himself being made personally alive.

But historical work on the New Testament is not without

value for faith, and for the following reasons. In the first place it shows us how small a foundation those writings afford for a historical account in the modern sense of the term, hence it shatters certain false props of faith, and that is a great gain. The Christian who imagines that the reliability of the records as historical documents gives certainty to his faith, is duly startled from his false repose by the work of the historian, which ought to make it clear to such a man that the possession of Christianity cannot be obtained so cheaply as he thinks. Secondly, historical work is constantly constructing afresh, with every possible new modification, whatsoever results can be obtained from the records. By this means the Christian believer is constantly called upon to compare afresh that portrait of Jesus which he carries within him as absolute truth, with the relative truth obtained by historical research. And this helps us directly to increasing knowledge of the inexhaustible treasures of the inner life of Christ, and to growing acquaintance with the ways of His sovereignty over the real world. Of course, we lose this advantage entirely if historical research is made to serve the ends of apologetics instead of remaining true to its own laws. When we speak of the historical Christ we mean that personal life of Jesus which speaks to us from the New Testament, viewed as the disciples' testimony to their faith. Historical research can neither give this nor take it away, and when we have it we know that we are at one with the living Church in possessing that gift of God which brings about our redemption.

The Person of Jesus is and must be an element in the reality of our own life.

§16. It is therefore possible for us to apprehend the historical Person of Jesus as an element in that reality which gives its fulness to our life. If we are to become Christians and attain to a real communion with God, it is necessary that we should so apprehend it. To have gained such an apprehension of Jesus by no means implies that we have attained a peculiarly sublime altitude in the Christian life, it is rather the most elementary thing in Christianity. We must first experience the personal life of Jesus to be a living power, and then, out of the joy and amazement that such a thing

really exists in the world, it becomes possible for the Christian religion to develop. No matter how carefully we may have been trained from our youth up in a well-ordered system of Christian doctrines, that is not Christian religion, for in that case communion with God is not vouchsafed to us, but is a task set for us. This communion, on which everything depends, is ours only when we can say to our souls that we mark God's working upon us in undeniable facts, and that we feel His Presence. Clearly this can become ours only through realities which we ourselves perceive to be such; not through that which others have experienced and describe to us, but through that alone which we ourselves experience. No one is ever awakened to true religion by allowing himself to be persuaded that religion in the heart must begin with an absolutely unhesitating confidence in narrators. Those men who have entangled others in such a dream will reject it for themselves if they are afterwards awakened. If religion consisted in accepting universal thoughts concerning God and the world which we could never have arrived at for ourselves, then indeed it might begin with unconditional confidence in the doctrines and narratives of other men; but if no man can be religious without the consciousness that God communes with him personally, then religion can only be kindled in such an experience in a man's own life as makes upon him the impression that God is thereby communing with him. The nature of the experiences amid which a man becomes conscious of God's working upon himself just where he stands, decides what will be the nature of that man's religion. We, for our part, become conscious of God's communion with us by the fact that the Person of Jesus reveals itself to us through the power of His inner life. On this fact alone is based the peculiarity of the Christian religion.

Hence the prime importance of preaching Christ and nothing else instead.

§17. For this reason, always, there is nothing so necessary in Christendom as the preaching of Christ, for to learn to see Him is the way of salvation for a Christian. But we do not help men into that way of salvation if we tell them, on the strength of New Testament narratives and doctrines, that Jesus was born of a virgin

as the Son of God; that He taught this and that; that He wrought many miracles and even raised the dead, and that He Himself rose again, and now, having ascended to the Father, rules with almighty power. Such a story is no gospel, be it never so impressively delivered. These things, received with childlike simplicity, may certainly draw men's attention to Jesus and give them an impulse to seek Him for themselves; but we certainly have not in these statements that Person of Jesus Himself which is able to redeem us. If, therefore, those doctrines and narratives are presented to men as the main thing in which they must believe in order to find the Redeemer, then we certainly delude them. Such statements are a great hindrance to men to-day, for the majority can no longer accept these things with childlike simplicity. The most that can happen is that assent may be wrung from them in anxiety for their soul's welfare, and in terror excited by a violent sermon. Then they strain themselves to believe, and yet they remain uncertain. Such strain and uncertainty hinder them from coming to Christ, for only they that are of the truth hear His voice.

Redemption, not doctrine, the first thing to be obtained.

§18. It is therefore a matter well worth consideration whether those doctrines and narratives ought not to be used in a different way from what has been customary. They are to be taught as forming part of the witness of the New Testament to Jesus, but not to be set before men with the demand that above all things there must be assent to them. If we do so demand, then we are not preaching the gospel; we are simply proclaiming a law; nor is it even a good law, for to the Pharisee it will be easy and to the upright man intolerable. We ought rather to preach that those men who found the way to God through Jesus did actually believe such marvellous things concerning Him. Let us by all means have this testimony of the disciples earnestly made known; but for this very reason, if we are seeking the same redemption which they found, we are not to take it for granted that everything which influenced the disciples, and was beyond all doubt real to them, must influence us in exactly the same way. If we do

expect this, then the very testimony of the disciples will prevent us from seeing that which is to us, in our present position, the accessible and sure basis of salvation. Moreover, we who are seeking redemption in Jesus are by no means to undertake, as if it were quite an easy task for us, to hold the same exalted beliefs about Him which they held. That they, as redeemed men, held them is not a reason why we must hold them in order to be redeemed. That would be to begin at the top, and to find the basis and ground of redemption in what is really its fruit. We have not to try to clamber up on high all by our own strength, but, like the disciples of old, we are to let ourselves be overpowered and uplifted by something which is a reality in our own experience and real beyond all doubt to ourselves as we are to-day. And what is thus real? We answer, first, the testimony of the disciples concerning the power and glory of Jesus. It is a fact that they did testify thus, and this ought to point us to Jesus Himself, and warn us why we are powerless to give such a testimony. But then, secondly, another reality is the inner life of Jesus, which rises up before us as a real power that is active in the world whenever we read the testimony of the disciples. In this we have Jesus Himself as the ground of our salvation.

What is redemption?

§19. If Jesus Himself is to redeem us we must be placed within His power, and only that has power over our inmost life which overwhelms us with the force of undoubted reality. But the power to raise us out of our previous nature can be found only in something that opposes and makes war on the experiences to which we have hitherto devoted ourselves. For this we must go to Jesus, and we shall feel that He sets a decision before us which demands our inmost concern. He claims to be the Saviour of the world, and the nearer we approach Him the clearer does it become that He is different from ourselves and from all other men. When we thus feel His spiritual power upon us, the question arises, "Are we willing to yield to this power, or shall we resist it?" No one can be spared this decision. Here is the single concrete form

wherein we choose our side for good or evil in the great history of humanity.

But now the Christian church has to make it clear to men that this decision is forced upon them by the real life amid which we live. This is the real summons to faith. It is certainly a difficult task, but there is meaning and reason in such a summons, and in no other.

We do not mean to say that a preacher who finds no difficulties in the story of Jesus such as prove hindrances to other men should conceal his position. He ought rather to give expression to his faith with all the fulness of his sense of possession. But his chief aim should be to make visible and active that which alone can be the basis of faith in himself as well as in others, and this is, not those beliefs, but Jesus only, the inner life of this man. Where this is made to work on souls, there the gospel is preached. Every believing sermon tends so to influence them, whether the preacher wills it or not, but the rule thus followed even unconsciously must be made clear to the consciousness of every preacher, so that even the indolent and incapable shall know what a duty they neglect if they obstruct the way to Him who is Himself in His appearance in history the glad tidings of God to man. Whenever the Person of Jesus touches us as a fact that is real to ourselves, then we hear the gospel preached. Not every one, indeed, can see the personal life of Jesus. We see it only when it pleases God to reveal His Son in us. But when this revelation does take place, then, under the impression which Jesus makes upon us, there arises in our hearts the certainty that God Himself is turning towards us in this experience. If we now ask, "How is it possible that so mighty an utterance should be spoken to us in the fact that Jesus stands before us as an undeniable part of what is real to ourselves?" or, "How can this fact become for us the intimation wherein God discloses Himself to us in His reality and power?" these questions can be answered only by the fact itself, and by what it undeniably contains. We must bid the man who would be saved not dream of believing every-

thing, but rather believe nothing but what the fact which he sees compels him to believe.

CHAPTER II.

HOW WE SEE GOD IN JESUS.

The limits which the story of Jesus imposes upon the historian.

§1. We begin by considering what will be admitted to be the historical reality concerning Jesus by a man of our time whose interest in Him is purely historical. It may be that here and there an earnest student of history, through no merely dull misconception, may question some of the records concerning Jesus, and declare them to be legendary, and to be the production of an actual spiritual movement which led men to imagine a historical background for that movement. Yet even then the chief point will still remain the same for him as it is for us. A historian has the right, and it may even be his duty, to declare the results of the investigation for which he is responsible. But he cannot remove the fact that in the story on which he thus passes judgment there is pourtrayed the consistent and clear portrait of a Personal Life that has no equal. Indeed, he may become so possessed by that portrait that it shall become impossible for him to regard it as a product of the poetical imagination. For, in truth, such a product would only present to him what he himself could produce. In that case his judgment as a historian concerning the story becomes limited by his present experience of the story's effect. Nothing else could so influence his historical judgment without doing violence to his conscience. Nothing but that definite picture given by the records when read as they stand, and so making a powerful impression upon him, could possibly limit his freedom of historical judgment. This always happens when the enquirer becomes a Christian. But even if he does not get so far, the fact remains unquestioned that the Christ of the New Testament shows a firmness of religious conviction, a clearness of moral judgment, and a purity and strength of will such as are combined

in no other figure in history. If we wish, then, to make these features of His character more distinct, we have a right to begin from those parts of His story which are not, as a rule, called in question even by those who do not know Jesus Himself.

The admitted features of the story of Jesus.

§2. All men are willing to allow that Jesus did actually appear in the history of the world in which we live. It is admitted that many hundred years ago He claimed to be the Messiah of Israel; that through His peculiar conception of His work as Messiah He drew upon Himself the hatred of His people, thereby incurring His own overthrow, and, finally, that notwithstanding all this, He died in the confidence of victory. If we saw nothing more in Jesus than this we should admit the facts, though we should pay no further heed to them. But we become more attentive when we perceive what it meant for a man to claim to be the Messiah of Israel. Such a man necessarily conceived that his existence and his work made the world complete, and that in his person the purposes of God's creation were accomplished. The mere vital energy of such a man compels our admiration. If along with this he had shown a mind overpowered by a fevered imagination, if he had been very sensitive and had sought for honour among men, we should have counted him made of common clay, a mere visionary, like many whom we know. But the story of Jesus describes to us just the opposite case. His speech is notably temperate and His reasoning remarkably clear. He is neither conceited nor overbearing, but constantly impresses us, to our surprise, with His humility of heart. If Jesus had simply taken up the Messianic ideal of Israel, and had His purpose not ranged beyond the spiritual horizon of the Jewish people, then His character as Messiah would have displayed no feature worthy of special note. For it is quite possible to imagine that among a people whose religion formed so large a part of their life, a highly gifted man might fancy himself called upon to realise the *certain goal* for which all were ardently longing. But on close inspection the will of Jesus is seen to be by no means the mere blossom of the

Jewish hope for a Messiah. In the work that He undertook, He rose above all that Israel had looked upon and hoped for as the highest good, and He was quite conscious that He was disappointing the hopes He aroused. Jesus claimed certainly, as was expected of the Messiah, that He should establish the Kingdom of God among men, and that He would thereby make the world complete. But the Kingdom of God was to Him the sovereignty of God in the inner life of personal beings and in their communion one with another. The members of the Kingdom of God, as Jesus understood it, are those men who are fully subject to God through boundless confidence in Him and unbounded love for their neighbours. In the fact that these spiritual considerations did rule His own being and that they were germinating in those few individuals who grouped themselves around Him, Jesus saw the dawn of the end of all things.

Jesus' perfect confidence in His success.

§3. Let us review those features of the portrait of Jesus which we have thus obtained. First of all we have the outward course of His work as Messiah, which tells us little of His inner life that can claim special consideration. It has two striking features; one, the conflict into which Jesus comes with pious Judaism and its hopes of a Messiah; and the other, the remarkable assurance which He maintained over against the opposition of the world, and in the face of death.

These points need to be made more clear, and we shall make them so if we realise the peculiar nature of Jesus' life-work and His attitude towards it. It is clear without further argument that He must have regarded His work as bound to succeed, seeing that He staked His life upon it. As soon as a man makes it consciously the goal of his life to secure the realisation of all that Jesus understood as the Kingdom of God, so soon also must that man advance to the further conviction that this realisation will actually come to pass. No one can be forced to advance in moral development up to a grasp of the idea that the personal life of man reaches its perfection in perfect love, and in a trust in a God who is the very power of that love: but the man who does grasp that thought is sensible also that nothing can interfere with his right to attain the

realisation of that idea. Convinced of this right, many men have become hard as steel against those forces of destiny which shattered their outward existence. Jesus had such a consciousness, the consciousness of the soul that has come to know its own eternal life, and in such possession He was like the martyrs who have answered the summons of the moral ideal He brought into the world. That feature of His personal life stands out grandly in the recorded story. And in truth it is no small matter if we let this personal power of "the good" in the figure of Jesus work upon us and move us to reverence; for no man can be redeemed by Him who does not bow in true reverence before that personal, living goodness which exists in its original purity in Him alone.

Jesus' perfect moral strength and His consciousness of it.

§4. Jesus is thus placed at the head of all those men who have joyfully suffered for the sake of the good. But to see this is by no means to reach that peculiar feature of His inner life which must work upon us as a fact if He is to redeem us. Jesus is separate from all men who seek to follow Him in self-surrender to the good, not simply as their never-equalled prototype, but also by the attitude which He assumes towards that ideal of perfect life which He reveals to men as their highest good.

In the first place, Jesus shows us the portrait of a man who is conscious of no inferiority in Himself to the ideal for which He sacrifices Himself. We do not gain this impression, of course, simply from isolated expressions which have been handed down to us as a testimony to His sinlessness. Such expressions taken by themselves have little force. But certainly the fact that Jesus thought of Himself as sinless stands out powerfully before us when we remember what He said and did at the Last Supper with His disciples. In face of a death whose horror He keenly felt, He was able to say that this death He was about to die would take away the burden of guilt from the hearts of those who should remember Him. He was able to look away from the death whose approach troubled Him to the moral need of men held captive by the consciousness of guilt, so deeply did He feel the horror of that need. And so mighty within Him was the consciousness of His

own purity, that He clearly saw that the impression which His death would cause would loose the spiritual bonds of those who had found Him and could remember Him. Jesus could not have spoken as He then did if He had been conscious of guilt within Himself. In that hour when the conscience of every man who is morally alive inexorably sums up his life, this man could conceive of His own moral strength and purity as that power which alone could conquer the sinner's inmost heart and free him from the deepest need. And this He did, not after the manner of an enthusiastic visionary, but as a man to whom the deepest moral knowledge gave a most tender conscience. He was the first to declare distinctly that the command to love is not simply one of the commandments but that it is the whole moral law, because it determines the disposition which is the condition of righteousness, and which therefore alone gives moral worth to human action. He led His disciples above all to recognise that such a life of love is the highest good for man, or, in other words, that without it nothing can give the heart true joy. Through this new conception of the highest good, or the Kingdom of God, a conception which no prophet of Israel had before Him, Jesus brought moral knowledge among men to its highest possible level. He has brought it about that, as far as His influence extends, every man feels guilty whose heart is not wholly given up to love.

But now it is plain that at the same time He saw set up thus before Him the highest conceivable standard for judgment of Himself. He counted it self-evident that He must find all His own joy, His unfailing joy in the life and freedom and strength of His own love. He could count Himself inwardly pure only if He persevered in incessant effort to be pure. Nevertheless, even standing where He did at that Last Supper, He said confidently that His Personality would lift away the burden of guilt from the heart of every man who should see that Personality enter death. In view of this, any one who feels the appeal of Jesus to his own conscience, must receive the impression that Jesus actually was what He claimed to be.

Jesus has indeed been, by His suffering for the sake of what

is good, an example which many have followed; in this further respect, however, He is incomparable, that He first saw what is good in all its glory, its fulness and its power, and that He nevertheless felt Himself not inferior to what He conceived and what He said. In all other cases, the very men whose goodness uplifts us give us such a conception of what is good that we see thereby how great is their own moral need. Jesus alone has had the conviction that He had no such need, and the man who learns to know Him admits that conviction to be correct. He awakens in us the deepest understanding of duty, and He remains at the same time Himself the highest standard for our conscience. This incomparable moral strength of Jesus must become clear to us if we see the simplest features of His appearance in history, and if we note in what He claimed to be the Messiah and the way in which He went to His death. When we see this, then our eyes are opened to the glory of all the rest of the record concerning Him; we see in it all the wonderful fact that it constantly gives us fresh views of other and yet other sides of the infinite life of a human soul. Such records are incomparable, and that not because of their contents alone; but their very existence is a wonderful fact, for it comes to us through the minds of men who did not experience in their own lives such untrammelled freedom in being good as He had. In spite of this, the tenderest features of such a life have been preserved in their narratives, and have become the true spiritual food for mankind. Jesus is for us a fact in His moral glory, in those inner movements of His soul which include the deepest moral knowledge, the never failing strength of His moral purpose and the bliss of knowing it; He is a fact for us which we do not accept for others' sake, but which we see for ourselves. He has thus become an integral part of all that is real to ourselves; and He fills with light all the world in which we stand. Jesus differs, then, from all men who follow Him by His conscious rising always to His own ideal and because He compels us to admit that He does rise to it.

But this is not the only difference between Him and all others.

Jesus claimed to give and to be God's greatest gift to men.

§5. Jesus would claim to have done more than make the best ideal clear for men, and more than live it out before them. As the Messiah of God, He claimed to set men no mere task to do, but to give to them God's perfect gift to enjoy. He was confident that He could so uplift men that they would be able actually to enjoy the highest good in a life of utter submission to God, and therefore in a life of love. The Jesus who thinks thus of Himself and who looks on men with such a confidence in His power to redeem them from the terrible misery He sees in all—that Jesus, I say, stands as a fact before us, and it is a fact that has no equal. The dying Buddha puts his confidence in the truth of his teaching; he leaves to his disciples the admonition that they may forget him, but they are to keep his teaching and the way that he has shown them. Plato says the like of Socrates. Now in the whole wide range of history there is no other figure, apart from Jesus, which so surprises us with originality of moral strength as do these two just named. But these two hid themselves modestly behind the teaching for which they lived and died, whereas Jesus knows no more sacred task than to point men to His own Person. His life and death proclaim the conviction that no man who desires true life can do without Him; every one must concern himself with Jesus, and must take to heart the fact of His personal life.

Jesus not a teacher concerning redemptive powers other than Himself.

§6. Jesus did not teach that He had brought other miraculous forces into the world, which were to be distinguished from Himself, and from the impression His Person would make on human hearts. He did not teach that souls should be set free by the mysterious operation of any such other forces. If we are told that this is the case, we must reply that such forces can in no case become to us a fact which shall master our inmost souls. Men may talk of such force, but the talking helps no one whose conscience Jesus has quickened. Of course a million voices out of the Christian church loudly proclaim this very theory a way of salvation; we are to be saved by certain mysterious forces which are organically connected with the worship and sacraments of the church. If, however, we

keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, these cries will not trouble us. Even if such a thought had crept into the records concerning Jesus, and claimed to be part of His own teaching—thank God, it is not the case—but if it were, then we should certainly regret the fact, but we should not let it influence us. We should quietly declare such a doctrine to be an error of the narrator. For it would contradict that which is our sole concern, that which has become for us as an undeniable fact concerning Jesus. The fact is this, that Jesus stands before us in history claiming to be Himself alone salvation for all men. We have no right whatever to imagine in addition any mysterious powers by means of which Jesus is to bring about our redemption. He Himself "is made unto us redemption." We can only understand His assertion in that sense. Any teaching must be a matter of utter indifference to us which tells of mysterious redemptive forces which are to proceed from Christ, and which for that very reason are not Christ Himself. Such teaching can produce no proof of its truth; it remains one of those mere assertions which ramble in plenty through empty heads. That great declaration, on the other hand, which is the whole of the gospel of Jesus, may easily be tested and tried as to whether it be true.

Jesus brings men into the Kingdom of God.

§7. Jesus asserts that He brings to men the highest good in the form of a Kingdom of God. Without doubt, by the Kingdom of God Jesus meant that God should rule in the inner life of men and in their intercourse with one another. God does so rule when the men on whom He works awake to unhesitating trust in Him, and hence to true-hearted love. Such men are in full submission to God. The fellowship which arises among them when their mutual love springs from a common source is the realm of God's full sovereignty. If, then, Jesus asserts that He brings such a Kingdom to men, He means simply this, that through the impression caused by His Person men are brought into submission to God. Of course, then, every one may test the truth of this assertion who who has at all learned to see the Person, the human soul of Jesus. The most important thing for the man who is to submit himself to

God is surely that he should be absolutely certain of the reality of God, and Jesus does establish in us, through the fact of His personal life, a certainty of God which covers every doubt. When once He has attracted us by the beauty of His Person, and made us bow before Him by its exalted character, then even amid our deepest doubts that Person of Jesus will remain present with us as a thing incomparable, the most precious fact in history, the most precious fact our life contains. If we then yield to His attraction and come to feel with deep reverence the strength and purity of His soul, disclosing to us the impurity and weakness of our own, then His mighty claim comes home to us. We learn to share His invincible confidence that He can uplift and bless perfectly those who do not turn away from Him.

We see in Jesus the Almighty God.

§8. Such confidence in the Person and cause of Jesus implies something else: it implies that we think and must think of a Power greater than all things, which will see to it that Jesus, who lost His life in this world, shall be none the less victorious over the same world. This thought of such a Power lays hold of us as firmly as did that view of Jesus by which we were overwhelmed. This is the beginning of the consciousness within us, that there is a living God; this is the only real beginning of an inward submission to Him. As soon as trust in Jesus awakens this thought within us, we connect the thought at once with our experience of the inner life of Jesus as a present fact in our own life. The startled sense we felt at the disclosure of actual, living goodness in His Person, and the sense of condemnation that we felt, are at once attributed by our souls to the power of God, of which we have now become conscious. The man who has felt these simple experiences cannot possibly attribute them to any other source. The God in whom he now believes for Jesus' sake, is as real and living to him as the man Jesus is in His marvellous sublimity of character. If we ask: How does our thought of God come to include for us the thought of Omnipotence? the answer is, Clearly from the Person of Jesus alone. We arrive at the thought of Omnipotence because we are

obliged to pay to Jesus the homage of believing that He must certainly succeed, even if all the world besides be against Him. The Omnipotence of which we become conscious in this way must be wielded by that same purpose which produced the life-work of Jesus. Nothing else could rule it.

God in Jesus Christ frees us from sin, from its condemnation and from its power.

§9. Thus God makes Himself known to us as the Power that is with Jesus. We are obliged, then, to confess that the existence of Jesus in this world of ours is the fact in which God so touches us as to come into communion with us. Of course, we learn at the same time how great the contrast is between Jesus and ourselves; and we feel it the more keenly, the more we become alive to that strength of His character which so overwhelms us that it makes the reality of God undeniable. But for this very reason the God we recognise is not only the God of Jesus Christ. He is our own God. This follows from the fact that the Man in whom we grasp with certainty the reality of God stands in the attitude of friendship towards men who feel themselves far removed from God. Luther says, "If we observe His loving and friendly companionship with His disciples, if we note how He rebukes without rejecting them, this will support and comfort us in every kind of trial. And this is the best and most excellent thing we have in Christ." [1] This personal attitude of Jesus assures us that His God is our God; and it thereby uplifts us into the Kingdom of God. Hence this fact, through which God touches us, not only relieves the impotence of the creature, which of itself can arrive at no certain knowledge of God, but at the same time it helps the sinner, who, when left to himself, tries to shut his eyes to the revelation of God, because God's nature is so strange to him. God enters into such sort of communion with us that He thereby forgives us our sins. Without forgiveness we should still be uncertain of the reality of God. God will become certain to us only if His revelation of Himself confirms the moral claims we feel within us. He does this as He comes to

(1) Luther, Second Enlarged Edition, xv., 470; l., 130.

us in Jesus, for He frees us from that moral want which the freedom and fulness of Jesus' love have compelled us to feel within ourselves. Unless we are in the grasp of the God who turns to us in Jesus, those thoughts concerning what is good which Jesus makes clear to us, only render us profoundly unhappy: for we cannot rid ourselves of these thoughts; we recognise their eternal truth; in them we first learn to understand the spiritual as distinct from the natural life. We see that we have no inner life at all until we recognise the good and let it rule in our hearts; and the clearer this becomes the more painfully are we sensible that all the force within us is in conflict with the good. The world which supports and feeds us does not seem to us to be ruled by that law which we know to be the law of life. Arrangements and movements, which seemed to open a free course to the good we desire, are upset or arrested by the stronger force of blind chance. Even human society, instead of a proving to be an organism for the realisation of freedom, surrounds us with so many obstacles that a communion with others in which we could find freedom and joy appears to be a far-distant and unattainable goal. At the same time the results of our own moral efforts are never of such a kind that we could trust our very life upon them; and least of all could any man do so whose conscience Jesus had quickened, for such men know well that by no strain of will can they bring forth from their own hearts that love which the law of Jesus demands. Now, if our life in the world has such an outlook, how can truth lie ultimately in the demand of the moral law that it is our duty to be good? No one can devote his life to ends which he does not fully admit to be capable of realisation. So the very thoughts which we know are able to set free our inner life only throw us back again into discouragement and despondency. We are divided against ourselves: we are unable to realise that good thing which is evidently the way of true life for us.

We are saved from this self-contradiction when once we have come to understand the fact that Jesus belongs to this world of ours. If he has only won from us the trust that His

cause is the cause of God, then we become sure that the good has a reality and a power in our own lives, because of the interest He showed in men, an interest which has stood the severest tests. Certainly, as soon as the law of duty is set forth and expounded to us as Jesus does it, so soon does that law receive at once our unflinching approval, whether we are sure of any fulfilment or not. But unless our existence in the world bore some sure sign that the good is not essentially foreign to human nature, we should never be certain that our knowledge of moral law could lift our very selves up to a higher life, or that we ourselves could attain to the blessed liberty of a moral life. Jesus Christ is that sure sign. His attitude towards us uplifts us and makes it possible for us to trust that the Divine Power, which must be with Him and with His work, cares for us and makes us fellow-workmen with Him in nothing less than the actual realisation of His moral purposes in a Kingdom of God. Hence, by the conviction that in Christ God communes with us, we are placed inwardly in a position to overcome the opposition between our natural life and the law of duty. It thus becomes possible for us to believe that those very things in our surroundings which are hostile to the good, are by God's power being made of service for what is good. Whenever our moral striving seems to exhaust itself in vain attempts, we have still the consolation that we stand in and belong to a historical movement in which the good wields ever greater sway, for Christ's work must reach its goal, and we know through God's communion with us that we are assisting in that work. Our impression that in Christ we have to do with God gives thus such satisfaction to our moral need that that impression deepens into the very clearest of certainties. For that is the true God who creates infinite life within us by causing us to rejoice in the good.

The revelation of God is thus complete in Christ.

§10. God communes with us, therefore, by the appearance of Jesus Christ in such a way that we are perfectly certain we see Him. Any doubts whether God does actually come near to us in Jesus are

removed from the Christian's mind by his experience that as soon as he understands this Man as the message of God to him, he finds a joy in bowing to what is inevitable, and in self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Our experience of the communion of God with us is, at the same time, the experience of moral deliverance. Without these things we should not have that certainty of faith which is present and active in every believer.

How shall we secure the rise of faith?

§11. The rise of faith as the consciousness that God communes with us cannot be forced. It remains the subjective experience of the man who learns to believe; he cannot transfer it to another. For whether anyone should place confidence in another person is certainly his own affair; it is possible to demonstrate the necessity for such a confidence to a man in whom it does not exist. If anyone would obtain this soul-emancipating trust in Jesus, he must turn to Jesus and place himself under Jesus' influence. We all dislike to do this, for we fear that the impression He makes upon us will tear away the veils that conceal our forlorn condition. If some men do overcome this fear and are not dismayed by the appearance of the Holy One, although they know themselves condemned before Him, that must remain a strange secret of their own inner life.

The objective grounds of the Christian faith.

§12. But, on the other hand, the man in whom trust towards Jesus has been aroused, does not lack objective ground for the attitude which he takes. He can justify that attitude to himself, and become free and joyful in the consciousness of standing in the truth. The Christian's consciousness that God communes with him rests on *two objective facts, the first of which is the historical fact of the Person of Jesus.* This fact is an element in our own personal reality. It must be admitted that unless we are to live half asleep, as it were, and to have an existence on the level of the brutes, we must face this fact as something in our lives, and must say what we will do with it. The Christian knows that every man who is morally alive must be able to see this

fact, which L. Ranke thus describes: "more guiltless and more powerful, more exalted and more holy, has nought ever been on earth than His conduct, His life and His death; the human race knows nothing that could be brought, even afar off, into comparison with it.[1] Hence all who close their eyes to this, the most precious fact that history contains, seem to the Christian to be shut up in a fatal subjectivity, and to be shut out from reality, from that nourishment without which the inner life must starve.

The second objective ground of the Christian's consciousness that God communes with him *is that we hear within ourselves the constant demand that we do right.* And this is not merely some high ideal which perhaps might not concern us; it is something that we feel bound to obey. Here we grasp an objective fact which must be held to be valid in any historical study of life. For life as studied in history, or, in other words, actual human life, cannot be conceived of without the assumption that men know they are unconditionally bound to obey the law of duty. Now we find that the God of whose reality Jesus makes us conscious actually makes us morally free; that is, He actually brings it about that to do right ceases to be a painful problem for us, and begins instead to be the very atmosphere in which we live. Here then we find a thought which we have a right to hold to be an objective reality for every man, and we find this very thought working in us to make us certain of God. There are no other objective grounds for the truth of the Christian religion.[2]

(1) "The Popes o Rome," 6th Edition, vol. I., p. 4.

(2) Compare my book, "Die Religion im Verhaeltnis zum Welterkennen und zur Sittlichkeit" (Religion in Relation to Knowledge and to Morality), Halle, 1879. It is obvious that for every man who shares this life of ours in history, the thought of duty has the significance above described. If we should cease to live this life of personal fellowship, this life of ours in the midst of history, then, of course, thoughts concerning duty would disappear from our mental horizon. On the other hand, as long as we retain even a glimmering of the idea that soul finds its true life only in personal fellowship, so long we must necessarily count it an eternal truth that we are bound by certain unconditional obligations. We could not live side by side, and know we were doing so, without assuming that we are so bound. Life in personal fellowship is always conceived as implying moral obligations as the eternal conditions of our life on earth. It is not simply true that we devise a shrewd rule by which we may preserve our worldly possession for ourselves, and that we then call that rule duty. On the contrary, we know that we obtain the true good of life for the first time when we obey duty's unconditional demand. And yet when we speak of the eternal truth of morality in this sense, we certainly do not mean to assert that the human individual carries that thought about with him, which we affirm to contain the eternal condition

The Christian cannot leave this Impregnable Rock for any customary beliefs.

§ 13. Anyone who has let the fact of the personal life of Jesus work upon him, and who has been led thereby to trust in Him, cannot help thinking that there is a Power over all things, and that that Power is with Jesus. In what he experiences at the hands of Jesus, he feels himself in the grip of this Power. Here his religious life begins, but this beginning is kept from being a purely subjective experience by these two objective things, viz.: by that historical fact which, when once seen, never disappears, and by his conscience. Through Jesus he has not merely a thought of God supported by proofs or authorities, but he has the Living God Himself, who is working upon him. The man who has attained that is a Christian. He is a Christian, although he is not in a position to recognise as truths all those things which other Christians have professed. Where he notes his inability to do so, he will by no means determine, as some may expect, that he will nevertheless profess them to be truths. For example, he might be obliged to insist that it by no means follows from the new life created in him by the grace of God through Jesus Christ that he could fairly affirm all the affirmations of the so-called Apostolic Creed. At the same time, however, he might observe that other Christians, for whom he entertains the greatest respect, declare that they can heartily join in confessing that Creed as their own. Now what will a Christian do in these circumstances who has become conscious, in the way we have described, that God is working upon him? He will certainly not accuse his fellow-Christians of professing to believe what they do not believe, nor will he at once declare to be false those portions of the Creed which he cannot see to be the truth. Perhaps he may be obliged to say they are false for other reasons; but the fact that these things are strange to him will not of itself alone lead him to deny their truth. Indeed, he has just had the experience that a fact, hitherto utterly strange to him, is now true, to his certain knowledge. But, on the other

for his personal life, just as he carries organs of sense. The thought of duty has arisen in the course of history, and moral knowledge is reached by the individual only when his personality is developed by communion with other men. But when once we have grasped the thought of duty, then that thought itself will lead to the conviction that it is only when we reach it that we first become conscious of what we are.

hand, when he observes that other Christians join in the Apostolic Creed, he will not be induced by seeing this to resolve to do the same. In his case such a resolve would not be an act springing genuinely out of that new life which he owes to the grace of God. If he were to make such a resolve he would act, not perhaps from cowardice or vanity, but, to put it briefly, with conscious untruthfulness. At best he would be yielding to an evil habit which would tend to drive him from that standing-ground that made him sure and glad, yes, from the impregnable rock of historical reality and the Eternal One. Through a strange confusion of thought this bad habit prevails largely.

The quicksands of the customary "foundations" so-called.

§14. Men say that we must have firm ground beneath us, and that for that reason it is well to hold immovably to what is presented to us in the confessions of the Church, and presented to us, indeed, by the Holy Scriptures. It is certainly of the utmost importance that the Christian should be conscious of standing on objective reality, and that his view of God's working upon him should not hang in subjective mid-air. But it is clear that we can have such an objective basis for our faith only in facts which force themselves upon us as undeniable elements in the reality in which we stand. Then alone can we rejoice in the truth of our faith, for in that case our religious thinking obeys the compulsion of a sacred necessity. On the other hand, we fall precisely into the error of a false subjectivity whenever we seek to appropriate, as the contents of our faith, any conceptions which we do not see arising out of the fact that God comes into communion with us. For then we do not fit ourselves to the objective fact which is given us, but follow our own arbitrary and subjective will.

The temptation to the subjectivity of such a false attachment to creeds is pressing in on us all in Christendom with tremendous force. There is but one sure protection against it, and that is the joy we have in objective reality of the personal life of Jesus, and in His power to make us feel God working upon us. The man who is sensible of this joy knows that he

is hidden in a mighty Hand; and he is able to recognise evil in the demand that he should yield to feeble and arbitrary subjectivity, an evil thing though dressed in an ecclesiastical garb. In view of the devastation this demand is causing, it is high time that the officials of the Church should be asked whether they ought to give it the weight of their approval. If they do so, they hold poor souls the tighter in their prison chains, and that is not the office of the Church, but the office of Cerberus. The Protestant people who are refusing, in increasing numbers, to join in an arbitrary confession of the faith, are simply guarding themselves against counting anything the basis of faith which does not possess the weight of undoubted fact. They are not holding by a false subjectivity, as some would-be churchly people would maintain; on the contrary, they are athirst for the objective in religion. So we mock their need if we offer them as a ground for their faith doctrines of Scripture and propositions of the Apostolic Creed in which they cannot, by any means, find an expression of what they themselves shall recognise as fact. They long for facts which shall stand firm at the moment of deepest doubt, and by which they shall feel that they are not without God in the world. The only such facts are the inner life of Jesus and their own conscience.

Luther once said that he would argue no more with any man who did not recognise Holy Scripture as the Word of God. If we were now to take such a course, it would certainly be very convenient and very pleasing to the flesh, but it would be utterly fruitless. For even where the admission was made, in most cases it would be made no longer in the unthinking fashion of Luther's day. It would be the result, as a rule, either of arbitrary resolve, or of shallowness, or of anxiety. We ought rather to say that we will argue with every man, and will only lay down our arms when we see that men have no sense of unconditional obligation, and that in them, therefore, conscience is dumb. Where such a point has not yet been reached, we are to go on preaching to men, not of things they cannot grasp as undoubtedly real, for such things can have

no power over them; but we are to preach of the inner life of the man Jesus, who rules in the world of conscience with far greater power than our weak faith is wont to imagine.

Jesus Christ Himself is the vital principle of our religion.

§15. If it is true that the reality of the personal life of Jesus, when grasped as a reality, becomes evidently the touch upon us of that God for whose sake we will forsake all else, then Jesus Himself and His power over the heart are actually the vital principle of our religion. "The Christian religion consists in the personal love and adoration of Jesus Christ; not in correct morality and correct doctrines, but in homage to the King."[1] And what are we to call that joy in the personal life of Jesus with which men's hearts glow when Jesus brings them into the presence of God, and they learn there how He slays and makes alive again? I have no other name for it but this: it is the mightiest love a soul can give. That mightiest love is what we have towards Jesus when once we have tasted the experience that it is through Him that God communes with us. The religious life of the Christian is inseparable from vision of the personal life of Jesus. That vision must be the Christian's constant companion, and so it is as he finds more and more that in such vision he grasps that reality without which all else in the world is empty and desolate.

It is a dangerous undertaking then, and one that needs gentle handling, to say there is such a thing as a false love for Christ. And yet this must be done. The very importance of the matter demands that it shall have firm handling. If love for Jesus is anything else than reverent joy in that personal life which makes us feel the judgment and mercy of God, then that love is but the flowering of an impure heart. We are easily impressed with the spiritual beauty of Jesus, and it arouses tender emotions in the soul; but if we do not get beyond this, we show thereby that we are not letting Jesus work upon us what He would. In these tender emotions we make ourselves virtually His equals, and remain precisely what

(1) F. W. Robertson, "Sein Lebensbild in Briefen" (His life as described in his letters) Gotha, 1888, p. 71.

we were before; but such emotions would be stifled if we really experienced what Jesus causes to dawn upon the sinful man who does not give play to his own vain feelings, but really gives himself into Jesus' hands. True love for Jesus is a far more serious matter; its attitude is determined by the discovery that He at once destroys all the self-contentment we had before, which, of course, was the very source whence a sentimental admiration for His spiritual beauty could flow.

We have said already that the religious experience of the Christians, or the experience of God's entrance with power into our own life, is inseparable from the vision of the personal life of Jesus. It is equally true to say that we only occupy the attitude of true love towards Jesus when we are raised by Him up to God and away beyond ourselves. Jesus loses nothing by our desires in manly earnest for nothing else than to trace in our own lives the working upon us of the power of the Everlasting God; indeed, it is only then that Jesus receives the reverent love which is His due.

Objections considered.

§16. It is to be hoped that we have thus really described how God comes near in such a manner that we can say He communes with us.

1. This will be denied no doubt, to begin with, by all those good people who look upon a historical event only as a means of expression for a religious idea, but do not know how to use it as a message of God to themselves. With these it is easy to deal. In so far as their theory may be taken as a fair expression of their mode of thought, they do not really stand within the Christian community. For that wherein *they* apprehend God, is in their view either a state of being possessed by religious ideas, or it is an emotional experience of some other kind in which they think they can trace the nearness of God. But for the Christian community the way of apprehension of God is the historical appearance of Christ, as that is made comprehensible among us by the preaching of the gospel and by practical Christian life.

2. A second and different case is that of those of our

opponents who wish to be considered thoroughly orthodox in the churchly sense. They have great sympathy with that inwardness of feeling not seldom exhibited by the mystic sort of people in their superiority to all external and historical facts; yet they cannot but grant our chief proposition. They say, as we do, that by the historical appearance of Jesus God so touches us that we become certain of Him. But they go on to explain that we must not remain where this leaves us; and they demand our acknowledgment that upon this basis there must be an immediate communion of God with the individual soul which Jesus has made accessible to Him. We shall have an opportunity later on of considering how far this demand is correct.

3. There is still another objection, and with this it is not so easy to deal. We may be told that what we have described as features of Jesus' personal life do not make such an impression, by any means, as to justify our assertion that he who comes to see their reality is himself thereby lifted over into the midst of a new reality. We cannot rebut such an objection; we have rather here to guard against a misunderstanding. The writer's power is insufficient for such speech concerning Jesus as should make His portrait alive and powerful in the soul of the reader. When a man can do that he ought to cease to be an academic theologian: he should hasten as a preacher of the gospel to give to the community the best thing that can be given it. Our task here is a more modest one, but it is not superfluous: it is to describe the inner process of the Christian religion, and, in the first place, to describe its fundamental experience. It is surely worth the labour simply to bring the Christian Church to recognise that it is the most important thing for a Christian to become inwardly certain, through facts that are objective and cannot be taken away from him, that God communes with him. This is clearly the most important thing if our salvation is to consist in our having God ruling in us. If God is to rule in us, then above all things God must become a reality for us, and so thoroughly that all that holds us in captivity shall be thereby thrust aside. Hence the question is whether God manifests Himself as a real

Power working upon us, so that we are conscious of it just as of anything else in this world. Jesus could not give us this knowledge through His teaching alone; even the sacred Scriptures, regarded as a compendium of doctrines and information concerning God and Christ, cannot convey it to us. We can have it through Jesus only when we apprehend His personal life to be now and for us a present part of the real world, and powerful enough to compel us to see God as a real power.

§17. We have sought to show how this can be.

Summary. The records concerning Jesus show us an inner life which wins our trust through its moral sublimity and its self-conscious Messiahship. No means which historical science can employ will suffice to give us full assurance that what the story offers us is an actual part of the history to which we belong. Doubt as to its actual historicity can be really overcome only by regarding the contents of what we find to be the inner life of Jesus. Of course, everyone endowed with ordinary human feeling can see that the records present to us a marvellously clear picture of personal life. But that that picture is not a work of mere fancy which has gradually become adopted by many as a text for religious and moral truths, can only be proved by the effect produced upon us by the contents of the picture.

We find the Person of Jesus only in the preaching of disciples who believed in Him. Is it perhaps possible that it is only the disciples we see, and not Jesus Himself? To this question no answer can be given by that science whose business is to find out what can be proved to be real. The man who does answer it must base his answer upon his own personal conviction. The Jesus, that is, the inner life of Jesus, that appears to us in those testimonies of the disciples concerning their faith, bring us face to face with a decision, to wit: are we going to exalt ourselves above this man, or are we going to bow before Him? If we bow before Him, we do so because His person works in us an experience that can be produced in no man by mere compulsion. We feel that He first reveals to us what personal, spiritual life is, and He makes us feel how starved and perplexed is our

own inner life. If the portrait of Jesus tells us these things, then we need not insist on knowing it in the exact historical sense: we can accept that portrait as the historical effect of a Person who is all-powerful in His sway over us, but whose personality we cannot describe with historical exactness. If anyone will insist on some other mode of procedure, then he must hold the opposite conviction, namely, that he could produce the portrait of Jesus out of his own spiritual resources. For our part we cannot do this, for it is He who makes us both poor and rich. We could never make the great, full portrait of an inner life which should so influence Christians, however many words we might say. It is the same in any other case: if a man wins our confidence, we find that the immediate impression which his personality makes upon us has far more in it for us than all that we might say to others in justification of our trust. The more powerfully the personal impression lays hold of us, the greater is the contrast between our powers of description and the impression which the memory retains. But when the way is pointed out to us, then we can construct for ourselves the picture of Jesus' inner life from the gospels. A man who is of the truth will hear the voice of God in the fact that such a life actually exists. No one can render help to him who will not see the facts; such a man gets drowned in his blank negation. But the man who lets himself be mastered by that power of personal life that is made manifest in Jesus gains thereby a new fulness of life, and is placed in a new world. He sees now what he could not see before, namely, that his own manner of life is wrong, and that what he has made of himself, alas! is nothing. Through the strength of Jesus he is made to acknowledge the reality of an Omnipotence which gives this Man the victory, and from the friendship of Jesus for the sinners whom He humbles, he gathers courage to believe that all these things mean God's love seeking out him, poor sinner as he is.

CHAPTER III.

GOD'S INCREASING COMMUNION WITH US.

Jesus' gift is ever unfolding afresh for us.

§1. When Jesus has given us these things, then we are united in our own inner life with God. We no longer need anyone to tell us that there is a God, for we cannot see the fact of the inner life of Jesus which is now present before our own souls without becoming aware of God in that fact. Just as little do we need to be told by others how God works upon us, for God comes into communion with us in the very event which makes us certain of Him. We find out how God works, for we actually experience God making us feel, by the spiritual power of Jesus, who He is, what is His will, and what are His purposes with us. We cannot communicate to a third person by any words of ours what God thus imparts to us. We cannot even find any complete expression of it which will satisfy ourselves. When we try to express it we constantly fall into the use of conceptions which contradict each other and cannot be combined in one definite and consistent picture. God takes away our self-confidence, and yet creates within us an invincible courage; He destroys our joy in life, and yet makes us blessed; He slays us, and yet makes alive; He lets us find rest, and yet fills us with unrest; He takes away the burden of a wasted life, and yet makes human life much more serious than it is without Him. God gives us a new existence that is complete and well-rounded; yet what we find therein is always turning into a longing for true life, and into desire to be renewed in spirit. If God would only allow us to remain what we were, then our conceptions of His working upon us would not be contradictory one of another; but as soon as we become aware that God is touching us in the personal life of Jesus, and so making us certain of Himself, then at once we feel that we have set out upon a new course of life. If we only keep in touch with the

inner life of Jesus, and are lifted up to God by Him, then we become constantly impressed anew by the fact that an ever-new fulness is being given to our life. We have not the mastery over it, but it is utterly inexhaustible; it is ever changing, changing, changing us.

The revelation of God in Christ to children.

§2. The faith which was planted in us as children by Christian training becomes perfected in this consciousness that God communes with us by the Person of Jesus. When we were children we heard of God through other Christians. At that time the inner life of Jesus could not yet be the revelation of God to us. We could not at that stage so apprehend it that we should be led to see in Jesus the working of God upon us. Nevertheless, even then God turned towards us, and so made it possible for us to understand what others said concerning Him: it was, all the time, the same revelation of Him, although in another form. Some of those who spoke to us of God—our parents, for example, if all was as it should be—convinced us that they saw that of which they spoke. Their earnest love, their truthfulness and self-control, their stronger and more mature personal life, became to us a revelation of the God on whom they called. We were brought near to God, not by the mere instruction we received, but by that personal life sanctified of God which found expression in the instruction. Just so, the Church, the community of believers, became our mother, and opened to us the Kingdom of God. We were led to God, in the first instance, not through the inner life of Jesus itself, but through persons who belonged to Him, who had been set free by Him and placed in the presence of God.

The later needs, in maturer years.

§3. But the food of childhood is insufficient for our later life. As we arrive at riper years our moral convictions must be reached independently; we have to distinguish for ourselves between good and evil. In respect of our faith in God also we outgrow our dependence on our surroundings. Of course, our religious faith can never be as independent as our moral convictions are; for

our certainty of the reality of God always depends upon our actually seeing that God is communing with us, hence it is impossible for us to become entirely independent of revelation. But the growth of our moral freedom makes necessary for us a revelation quite different from that which can be imparted to a child. When we awake to the consciousness of our moral responsibility, we are compelled to think where we are, and thereby free ourselves and realise ourselves inwardly as so distinct from our surroundings that the faith of other men can no longer be for us a decisive proof of the presence of God. God must speak more distinctly to a man who has been thrown upon himself and isolated by the power of his moral thoughts. Hence the Christian Church, which takes the child in her arms, points the adult to something away beyond herself. She points him to the fact which she holds in constant remembrance as the foundation for her own existence, namely, the Personal life of Jesus. When we have been trained to moral freedom, and are thus enabled to judge our own conduct, it soon becomes impossible for us to profess the same faith in God in which we grew up as children. We can no longer depend, as the child does, on the persons about us, for we now actually test the spiritual life of others, and that by ideals which we of ourselves assert to be right. Our religious faith seeks surer foundations, for we have learned what sort of thing a truly well-grounded personal conviction is. But, above all, when we are amid the pains of moral life, we cannot avoid the feeling and the question, Has God forsaken us? When we are obliged to admit that we have injured our spiritual strength, and that we have become a hindrance to what is good, then the thought of that Omnipotence which supports and protects us grows faint within us. For it comes upon us as an undeniable truth that our ways run contrary to that which alone can ultimately prevail. Then we are forsaken of God, so far as we can see. Of course we may try to reassert ourselves, even in such a position. We may, for example, take those thoughts of the love of God which express the confidence of Christian faith, and try to use them to deaden and silence our own experience, wherein

no trace of God's love is written. This is the practice men are led to adopt when they are told that it will help them if they determine to accept Christian doctrines.

Again, we may be honest, and give up faith that a God has anything to do with us, and may still retain our faith in moral ideals, and may resolve to live for these. This is the position of men without number, who are called by their wealth and culture to be the intellectual guides of the people.

Or, finally, we may join the ranks of those who fling away all that uplifts the soul, and abandon ourselves to the carelessness of brutish life. This last course is but the natural outcome of the other two, for both these are equally untrue. For, in the one case, all thought of the love of God is meaningless to us if we feel that we are condemned by that power which alone we can think of as divine. And, in the second case, a man who is conscious that he is wrong cannot find any *comfort* in believing in moral ideals, except at the cost of falsifying those ideals and deceiving himself. Such persons evade the truth that a man can only will the good by denying himself, and that he can only deny himself when he has inwardly risen above all need; he cannot deny himself when he is rendered inwardly unhappy and powerless by the consciousness of being wrong.

It is not possible, then, for an adult to feel himself as thoroughly in the protection of God as a child feels unless he has a different revelation of God from that which a child can grasp. We rise out of the God-forsaken condition of an evil conscience and find our way back to God only when we are able to see that God has regard to this need of ours in His revelation of Himself. Jesus brings the vision of this to us, for by His appearance in history He makes us certain of God, when, for conscience' sake, we cannot rest content with any mere record of the religious thoughts of other men.

The rise of the sense of need of God. Jesus meets it.

§4. Every man who has come to be at all conscious of what is good may be led on to understand that God *can be* none other than the Personal

Vitality and Power of Goodness; and the marvellous fact of the Person of Jesus corresponds exactly to this hope of our hearts concerning God and gives it a positive answer. While from our own inner life we gain no certain knowledge of the power of the Good over the real, Jesus makes us certain of it by exhibiting in His Person the living fulness and undoubted power of a good will, and thus He gives us a vision of the power of the Good over the real. We find in Him the first one who makes clear and gives a definite character to those moral ideals by which we judge ourselves and others. Hence we cannot judge Him, but we feel ourselves judged by Him. If we do not know Him, then the trouble of our evil conscience grows to its climax and utters itself in the thought that there is no God. For the contrast between what we ought to be and what we are, between our desire for life and our feeling of helplessness, prevents any strong faith in God from arising within us. But if, on the contrary, Jesus has become a real fact to us, He makes us feel that the Good has a power over the real, and He makes us feel also that we are separate from that power. In this experience a man who is morally mature gains a new certainty of God which is no longer dispelled by his consciousness of guilt, but confirmed by it. We do not believe in God on the strength of what we observe in ourselves; it is also true that we do not believe in Him because of what others tells us. Our well-meaning friends can utter no words which can avail against the reality of our moral need; only some reality which is similarly undeniable can help us there. But now, what we cannot do of ourselves we must do for Jesus' sake. He makes us grasp the thought that God rules in this real world of which we ourselves are conscious. We can think of ourselves as being without God; we cannot think so of Him. By the strength of His inner life He makes clear to us both our own moral powerlessness and the reality of God. The power of Jesus over personal lives consists in the fact that when He comes to them He causes them at once to despair over their own inability and to become aware of God. But when Jesus has revealed God in such a way to

men, He then uses His power over them so as to uplift them.

What is Jesus' redemption of us?

§5. Jesus gathers together all His powers for the task of redemption, which is His great vocation. This vocation is to reveal to us the blessedness of the life of a man who is in fellowship with God, and also His own desire to help us and His invincible confidence that He can do so. He shows this latter to the men who experience His power over them, and so redeems them. For they gather from this that the God whom they learned to know first as the Father of Jesus Christ and the Judge of their wrong-doing, desires, nevertheless, to be their Father also. Thus we become aware of God's working upon us by placing ourselves under the influence of the inner life of Jesus in willing self-surrender and submission. Herein lies the true analogy between the faith of a Christian and that of a child. *We must suffer ourselves to be lifted, like children, above all that we are when left to ourselves.* In this way we fulfil the commandment that we shall become as little children. On the other hand, we certainly do not resemble children if we try to copy the religious conceptions which prevail around us. For while such imitation follows naturally in the case of a child, we can only accomplish it by force, as it were. Though we might attain the same outward result, we should be acting in a spirit entirely opposed to that of a child. The child-like spirit can only arise within us when our experience is the same as a child's; in other words, when we meet with a personal life which compels us to trust it without reserve. Only the Person of Jesus can arouse such trust in a man who has awakened to moral self-consciousness. If such a man surrenders himself to anything or anyone else, he throws away not only his trust but himself.

He transforms the old world for us and also brings in a new one.

§6. Now, when the fact of Jesus' personal influence upon us has led us to recognise that God reveals Himself to us and pours out His love upon us, we find that the whole world is transformed for us. For the world wherein this has befallen us is no longer to our eyes

a weary stretch of numberless and meaningless events. What we experience at the hands of Jesus tells us the purpose of all that reality amidst whose relationships His Person stands. We find in Him that love means to save us and that it has power over all that is real, and so then the particular events of our lives all turn out to be efforts of God in behalf of our souls. The whole world appears to us now to be a well-ordered system whose culminating point is the Person of Jesus and His work upon us. And yet this new view of the world is by no means the climax of all that is included in the thought of the Christian who has become certain of God through the reality of Jesus: he has more than an altered view of the work-a-day world: he sees also a new reality which is to take form in himself and others through that which God will make of them.

But we are only raised to such life amid new reality when that fact remains present to us which alone can tell us the depths of our moral need, and can then raise us to the experience of divine life. We affirm that this fact is the inner life of the man Jesus, and yet we cannot prove it. How could we, since everyone must experience *for himself* that the spiritual power of Jesus destroys his confidence in self, and creates in him a trust in God, so making him a new creature? All we can do is to show how a man becomes inwardly changed, when he does find and understand the communion of God with his soul in the influence of Jesus upon him. But we cannot substitute any product of reflection for this fact itself which we are to experience as the turning of God towards us. And yet, self-evident as this appears, it is, nevertheless, only with immense difficulty that we free ourselves from the contrary way of thinking. Even we who are Christians are constantly tempted to regard Jesus Christ as the pre-supposition from which our relation to God may be inferred with logical certainty. The truth is that we ought to grasp Him as a fact which is real beyond all doubt, and which convinces us, by the power of its own contents, that God is turning to us in that very fact itself, in order to draw us to Himself. But then it is infinitely

more convenient to put aside this vision of a fact, and to seek the guarantees of our certainty of the grace of God in thoughts concerning Jesus, instead of seeking them in Jesus Himself; for the vision of this fact, in other words, the real, personal life of Jesus, constantly imposes new labour upon our souls, and makes us find God's power in an experience which is most painful, and which utterly breaks down our self-conceit. If, instead of this, it were actually possible for us to find true blessing in such mere reflections concerning Christ, and if these could give us substantial guarantees of the presence of God, then it would be possible to avoid that painful inward process amid which we become lifted to the consciousness that God is acting upon us.

Doctrines concerning Jesus cannot do this: they may do the opposite.

§7. The temptation to follow this attraction always accompanies an acceptance as a matter of custom of the doctrines of the Church concerning Christ and His work. These doctrines may, indeed, be expressions of well-grounded Christian thinking: but they become, in spite of that, a powerful temptation to us if they hinder us from seeing the fact in which we are to find God entering our life, and which therefore ought to be the basis of our faith in Him. The same thoughts concerning Christ which as thought out by others may be a sign of their redemption, will become deadly to us if we allow ourselves to be persuaded that we must accept them in order to be redeemed. For then the fact remains concealed from us that God alone is our Helper, that our highest good is to be at one with Him, and that we are at one with Him only when we are able to trace in undeniable facts the evidence that His power is the power of love that is seeking us out and overcoming the evil within us. If our hearts no longer impel us to seek in Jesus Christ the fact in which God reveals Himself to us, then, even surrounded by the greatest wealth of Christian ideas, we shall soon come to desire, not God Himself, but security from Him and protection from His power.

He who would confess the Deity of Christ must first know Jesus, and Jesus' influence upon his life.

§8. This danger is clearly seen, let us observe, in the way in which the Christian Churches use the confession of the Deity of Christ. They do not, of course, abandon the proposition that Christ is the Mediator through whom Christian people have access to God, or through whom their communion with Him is wrought. But the proposition is robbed of its meaning by what is added to it. In other words, it is regarded as self-evident that if we wish to enjoy the mediation of Christ we must first of all confess His Deity. This demand prevents many an honest man from coming to Christ, and disturbs the clearness of many an earnest Christian's faith. Its injustice can no longer be concealed. To confess the Deity of Jesus means, in plain words, to confess that Jesus is God. It is clearly impossible for a man to appropriate this thought to himself so as to find any meaning in the words, unless Jesus has already led him to break with his past and to enter with living power upon a new existence.

If we are to understand the proposition that Jesus is God, it is evident in the first place that we must know Jesus Himself. If we do not learn to know Him, and if we nevertheless go on using the thought that He is God, then we only possess the general idea of Divine Incarnation. A man who is not utterly devoid of imagination may do something even with this; he may construct a philosophy of the world in which he himself plays the part of spectator of a performance. But such a play of imagination round the thought of Incarnation and such a philosophy have no significance for a man's own personal existence. It may be said, however, that the doctrine that in Jesus God became man is nevertheless of service because it draws men's attention to Him. That is true, but it by no means follows that in order to become Christians we must adopt the confession of that doctrine, or even that we could do so. It can only incite us to gaze upon the Man who so influenced others that in Him they were able to see a God who had become man. In that case it is possible that we may learn and understand what moves the soul of Jesus, and feel the power of that

Personal Spirit, which in all its movements reveals the power of what is good, and at the same time ventures to place itself in the midst of history. Then, on the ground of such experience of the man Jesus, there may begin to germinate and rise within us the knowledge that God Himself can be none other than that Personal Spirit whose influence reaches us through Jesus. It is what we experience at the hands of Jesus that first gives definite meaning to the confession of the Deity of Christ. Redeeming power for us can only lie in something which actually works upon us. But the doctrine of the Deity of Christ, on the contrary, can of itself help no one. The man who only knows that doctrine and the name of Jesus, and who is also so devoid of character as to repeat the doctrine after others, is certainly not made a Christian by that. Hence it is meaningless to say to men, "If you wish to be redeemed by Christ you must believe in His Deity." We ought rather to put the matter thus: "If you wish to be redeemed by Christ, you must experience in the fact of His Person that God communes with you. To experience that is redemption."

He who would confess that Jesus is God, must also have recognised God.

§9. Secondly, if we are truthfully to confess the Deity of Jesus, it is necessary that we should have recognised God. But we first see clearly what God really is when we experience God's communion with us in the influence which Jesus has upon us. Before God becomes a power in our inner life and creates new life within us we have necessarily false notions concerning Him. By His own wonderful appearance Jesus can overcome both our doubts as to the reality of God and our illusions concerning Him. Has a man seen that wondrous personal life of Jesus and does he feel in it the mighty working of God upon himself, then in that he has the experience of redemption. The vision of God working on us in such wise is redemption. Now, how is it possible for anyone who has not had this experience to appropriate as his own the thought of the Deity of Christ? If that be possible, then it is also possible that, entirely of ourselves, we should understand something which Jesus alone, by

redeeming us, can make us understand, namely, the expression, "Deity." In that case, something which we are supposed to receive through Jesus as the revelation of God Himself is placed at the mercy of man's caprice, and he may give to the expression any meaning he pleases.

And so the Church ought by no means to say to the men she wishes to lead on the way of redemption, "Believe in the Deity of Jesus, that ye may be saved." She ought rather to say, "Do not imagine that you can either believe or understand it, for only the redeemed can do that." The true teaching of the Church concerning the significance of the Person and Work of Jesus can only be adopted by a man to whom Jesus Christ means everything.

The injury done to men by the customary doctrine of the Atonement.

§10. The demand that men shall confess a definite doctrine concerning Christ as a condition of redemption is not the only customary injury that is being done. The one question of absolute importance is whether Jesus gains a power over us through His personal life. And a second hindrance to this may easily arise from the contents of the Church's doctrines of the Person and Work of Jesus.

This hindrance may be clearly seen in that doctrine of the Atonement which the Reformers derived from the theology of the Middle Ages, with certain well-known alterations. According to that doctrine there was a divine nature in Jesus, and because of it the deeds which He actually did were able to remove those hindrances in God which restrained His love for sinful humanity. Since Jesus' work wrought satisfaction for God in view of the injury done to Him by sin, it becomes the ground of our certainty that God *can* forgive us, and *can* receive us again into the realm of His grace. This conclusion—that God *can* do such things for us—is, of course, the highest point we can reach on the assumption of that doctrine, viz., that Christ's work is made a work of redemption by His divine nature, a nature not fully defined, and which He is in some way supposed to possess. This indefinite conception of Christ's divine nature

may indeed serve us in one way, namely, by adding a sort of explanation as to how what is to us an incomprehensible procedure becomes possible, namely, that God should turn towards the sinner and proffer him His love. But the thought that in some mysterious way there was divine nature in Jesus cannot help us to think of God's forgiveness as a *real* thing that is actually ours. Yet this alone can satisfy our longing for redemption.

The merits and defects of the Reformers' doctrine of the Atonement.

§11. As opposed to Socinianism that doctrine of the Reformers concerning the Atonement was in the right, and it may claim even to-day that it exalts an important truth as against rationalistic disfigurements of the Christian thought concerning the Atonement. For the Christian faith is obviously a very feeble thing if all it does is to infer that divine forgiveness goes without saying because we have learned that God is love.[1] Anyone must have utterly misunderstood the history of Jesus' life who only gathers from it that He proclaimed such an inference as a truth which any man can grasp. If the work of Jesus be seriously considered, it will rather make the impression on the student that the divine forgiveness of sins is not a matter of course, but is something utterly marvellous. It is therefore a merit of the Reformers' doctrine of Atonement which cannot be too highly praised, that it emphasises this impression made by the story of Jesus. Their doctrine represents the work of Jesus as simply that satisfaction given to God which makes it *possible* for Him to perform that act of forgiveness, an act which would otherwise be impossible. But this very form of recording the important truth that divine forgiveness is not a matter of course is of little use for the end it seeks.

(i.) For in the first place this form of the doctrine expects that a man can see why it has become possible for God to forgive him. But the more a man supposes he has this insight, the more will he tend to lose sight of the idea that the forgiveness is an act of incomprehensible goodness. We can see how

(1) This opinion has been attributed to Ritschl; I consider this the grossest misrepresentation of his theology which has been made.

thoroughly that doctrine of Atonement leads into contradiction of the actual experiences of the forgiveness of sins, if we remember the assertion that since Christ has rendered complete satisfaction to God, divine forgiveness is an act of the strictest justice. That assertion, made by the orthodox theology of the seventeenth century, was certainly very comprehensible; but how far does such an opinion lie from the inner experience of the man whom Christ comforts! Plainly, then, the thought that the work of Christ is a satisfaction for our sin because of the divine nature that works within Him, leads ultimately to the denial of the very thing it ought to guard.

(ii.) Again, this orthodox doctrine of the Atonement leaves the individual in the end in the same position where he is left by rationalism, with its assertion that all Jesus did was to proclaim that God, as the loving Father, is willing to forgive. The supporters of the orthodox doctrine observe, rightly enough, that such a proclamation is of no use to the sinner, for the simple reason that he cannot believe it. Over against this declaration of what some one thinks, there stands the undeniable reality of his own feeling of guilt. The man who feels condemnation by the Eternal in his own consciousness of guilt is not so easily persuaded that acceptance of a doctrine will take away this reality from him. He finds himself in a condition which to him is an undeniable fact; and is he quite able to step out of that reality in which he finds himself, out of that condemnation whose justice he sees, for the sake of a doctrine which others preach to him? Jesus did indeed speak of that love of the Heavenly Father which is prepared to forgive without reserve those who repent, but He never made to anyone the degrading suggestion that it should be accepted simply on the strength of His mere statement. Jesus did not write the story of the Prodigal Son on a sheet of paper for men who knew nothing of Himself. He told it rather to men who saw Him, and who, because of His own personal life, were to be sure there was a Father in Heaven, of whom He was speaking. It is evident that ideas belonging to Catholic piety have sprung up again amid rationalism, and in the wide areas of the liberal

Christianity of our time as well as amid pietism; the evidence is this fancy that the mere doctrine of the father-like love of God can help the troubled sinner. For this fancy corresponds exactly to the Catholic practice, which does not minister to the inner life of the Christian thirsting for truth and reality, but requires instead that, like the Jesuits, we shall forego altogether any inner life of our own, full of sincerity and truthfulness. A sinner who is not willing to tread the Jesuitical path will heartily scorn the suggestion that he either can or ought to approve of that rationalistic doctrine. Thus Protestant orthodoxy exhibited some of the genuine instincts of the Reformation when, during the Socinian controversy, it fought to the bitter end against that rationalistic dream.

But what now must be said of the practical working of the orthodox doctrine itself? It rejects the rationalistic doctrine just described, and says: "It is impossible that God can forgive as a mere matter of course, without first doing something else." So it goes on to say that first the work and sufferings of Christ provided a satisfaction for the justice of God, and then this made it possible for Him to forgive sinners. Thus the attempt is made to face the fact that no sinner who is trying to be honest could by any possibility expect God's forgiveness simply as a matter of course. But then, suppose a sinner whose whole soul has been broken by the feeling of his moral unworthiness should accept this orthodox doctrine, he would still remain precisely where the teaching of rationalism would leave him. Even suppose the doctrine true, that God *can* spare sinners the torments of hell because Jesus suffered these in their stead, still, no sinner who has become conscious of his need can draw from this ability of God to forgive all men the only inference that would actually relieve his distress. He cannot say to himself, "Since God *can* forgive all men, he *does* actually forgive me."

Now what has orthodox theology done to bridge over the chasm between the universal possibility of forgiveness and that actual forgiveness of God which I need? It has proposed a doctrine of the "Plan of Salvation"; and in this we are told

that various stages of help by Divine Grace are needed to bring the sinner to appropriate for himself that salvation which has been objectively provided, namely, that deliverance of God from the necessity of condemning us of which we are told in the doctrine of the work of Christ. But even this doctrine, again, may be true, and yet it will not deliver anyone who accepts it from his own moral need. For the sinner will be constantly driven to ask himself whether, after all, what it says, and what may really happen with others, will actually come to pass in his own case. Repeated assurances that he will get the certainty, if he only faithfully adopts the doctrine and seek to live by it, do not help him at all. Any Christian who has but a trace of earnest desire for life, will certainly not be put off with words like these for food. He demands a fact which shall outweigh the fact of his inward feeling of condemnation. Nothing can help him but a fact which shall speak to him from an undeniable event, and which shall convince him that God does forgive him, that is, forgives this particular man. The orthodox theology has not opened the way for this fact, but has lost it.

It may well cause sheer amazement to see pious men, who are enthusiastic for their Protestant faith, who can be nevertheless quite content with the orthodox doctrine of the work of Christ and the "Plan of Salvation," things which can by no means bring a sinner to what he needs for his redemption, even if he resolve to accept them. This would be still quite incomprehensible, even if these men had never known Jesus from their Bibles. Their love for Him, to which their hymns and lives bear abundant witness, justifies us in thinking that, in spite of their doctrine, they must have received their actual proof of God's forgiveness from the fact that the inner life of Jesus has confronted them as a real element in history.

The doctrine of vicarious suffering: its real significance; and its mistaken use.

§12. On the other hand, it is quite easy to understand why men are unwilling to let go the thought that redemption has been won by the vicarious suffering of Christ. For when once the believer has heard the message of God to him in Christ, and

sees therein that God's forgiveness has come to himself, his faith naturally conceives that only through the fact of the moral Personality of Jesus, made perfect through suffering, could God enter once more into communion with men who have sinned. Nay, more; he says more certainly, as he looks back upon Jesus' work, "He suffers what we should have suffered." Hence it always seems remarkable to find so little said in the New Testament of this idea that Christ bore our punishment. This would be very natural. But we act in an utterly unnatural and mischievous way if, instead of this, we adopt the ecclesiastical dogma of satisfaction, and make the idea of substitution the starting-point from which we are to understand Jesus, and the ground of our certainty of the forgiveness of our sin. The idea that Jesus has borne our punishment cannot help us to such comprehension or such certainty. It has another purpose to fulfil in the life of the Christian, as may be clearly seen from the following considerations.

The man who has received forgiveness through Christ will constantly experience afresh that doubts arise from his sense of sin, and seek to rob him of the spiritual treasure he has got. But if he has truly found in Jesus a God who forgives him, then he will also find help against the doubts of his evil conscience by looking upon Jesus. He will see that while Jesus dispensed forgiveness, He was at the same time consciously working to establish the inviolable justice of God's moral order. Now here is just where the doctrine of the vicarious suffering of Jesus takes its rise: it is thus that this thought arises in the man who has already received forgiveness from Jesus. It helps to overcome the doubts of such a man as to the reality of the forgiveness which he has received. But it is a strange misunderstanding to imagine that it can serve in quite different circumstances, and can give certainty of forgiveness to one who is not already redeemed. In such a man the doctrine will only raise false conceptions of God if he propose to follow it. If he follows such a suggestion, he will conceive of God as a Being who cannot forgive at all, but who can actually traffic with men in matters of justice.

Luther's idea of vicarious satisfaction.

§13. It is interesting to observe here how strongly Luther felt that the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction does not by any means serve to set forth that which procures the sinner divine forgiveness. The doctrine has rather to do with the thoughts that the evil conscience of the sinner prompts concerning God's attitude towards him. The doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction is treated as intended to express the faith that these are overcome; and so it makes use of those ideas which an evil conscience would employ in thinking of God's relation to a sinful man. It teaches that Jesus wrought out precisely that which, according to the verdict of an evil conscience, God must demand from the sinner before He can forgive him. And these ideas are harmless if they arise in the mind of a man who has already received forgiveness quite apart from all this, and who simply uses them to combat the doubts as to the reality of forgiveness which arise within him from his consciousness of guilt; but they do harm when they are supposed to express the only ground for trust in God's forgiveness. In this latter case they increase the illusion, so very convenient for the sinner, that the strained relations between God and himself can be set right by a kind of traffic in justice which the reason can see through, and then they conceal the truth that this strained relationship can only be removed by the act of forgiveness which is indeed an incomprehensible revelation of personal love. Luther saw all this concerning the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction; and so, on the one hand, he supported and defended it as one of the Church's precious jewels; but, on the other, he also pointed out its defect, namely, the application of legal conceptions to the relations between God and man.

The following utterance of Luther is very instructive in this connection. It is taken from a sermon which did not appear until the last issue of his Summer-Postille, in 1543.[1] He says, "The whole Papacy has had no better idea what to teach concerning Repentance than that it consists of three parts, which they call Regret, Confession, and Satisfaction, and they are

(1) Erlangen Edition, xi., 306.

unable to teach the people aright concerning any one of these. And, indeed, as to the word 'satisfactio,' satisfaction, we have been willing to please them and let it pass (in the hope that by gentleness we might bring them to the true doctrine); yet on the understanding that it means not our giving satisfaction but Christ's, namely, that He pays for our sins and conciliates God by His own blood and death. But since we have so often experienced hitherto, and still plainly see that we cannot win them at all by any gentleness, and that the longer they live the more they will contradict the true doctrine, so we must strip ourselves clean of them, and part from them, and have nothing more to do with the words they have invented in their schools, with which they now only seek to confirm their old error and lies. Therefore, for our part, shall this word satisfaction continue no longer, and it shall be dead in our churches and our theology, and it shall be handed over to the judges and schools of the law, where it belongs, and whence also the Papists took it." In these words it is clearly declared (i.) that a satisfaction rendered to God for the purpose of restoring His grace to the sinner does not in the least concern the communion of man with God; (ii.) that this idea came from the law courts into theology through the medium of the Catholic sacrament of penance; and finally (iii.) that Luther had admitted it into consideration in the doctrine of Atonement out of friendly regard for the then prevailing mode of thought, but that he had in view its entire repudiation.[1] Hence we may clearly conclude that Luther saw, indeed, how the idea of a satisfaction wrought by Christ had arisen from an erroneous view of the relation of the sinner to God; but that he nevertheless used the idea, because he wished to grapple with the most injurious error of Rome on its own field of thought. He might, indeed, have said that a man who has already received God's forgiveness in another way does not need to trouble himself as to the accuracy of such doctrinal

(1) H. Schultz, in his "Doctrine of the Deity of Christ" (Die Lehre von der Gottheit Christi, 1881), p. 194, says, with reference to this passage, that Luther here rejects altogether the word satisfaction, and yet only with regard to the doctrine of repentance. But the remarkable feature of the passage appears to me to be that Luther here rejects the word in the sense of the satisfaction wrought by Christ. It is otherwise in xxiv., 86, where Luther says, in regard to the mischief which the word has wrought as it is used in the Sacrament of Penance: "For this reason, too, I am against the word 'satisfaction,' and wish it had never arisen."

ideas, and that he himself had employed them in common with the elder church; and yet the fact is that Luther did feel, and did say that he felt, the incongruity of the juristic conceptions with which that doctrine is constructed.

Forgiveness: the Socinian and rationalistic doctrine of it; the orthodox doctrine of it; the truth concerning it.

§14. According to Socinian and rationalistic teaching, Christ simply proclaimed the forgiveness of sins; according to the orthodox doctrine, He made it possible; in truth He has performed it for us, and has done this in such a way that He makes any man, who is lifted up to God through Him, experience afresh constantly that God means to show Himself a Father to such a man, and actually forgives him. In the first case, for the Socinian and rationalist it is enough that they see in Jesus a man who proclaims a divine truth. In the second case, for the orthodox it is sufficient that we conceive of a Divine Being united with Jesus, and yet other than Himself. But in the third case forgiveness itself only becomes ours when we actually behold God Himself in the historical Christ. The fact that the figure of Jesus comes within our horizon, and that we look upon His inner life and let it influence us, comes to mean to us that just by this fact God forgives our sins. As Jesus comes inwardly near to us, or, in other words, becomes comprehensible to us through the preaching of the gospel and in Christian intercourse, that is, through the activity of His people, just then and there His purpose in regard to all men is accomplished in us; He plucks us out of our moral need. Then and there we step within the shadow of His Person, and we may claim that we too, as much as anyone can be — we too are reached by His attitude of friendship towards sinners, and by His faithfulness to His work, just like every one else on whom, anywhere or in any way, Jesus has accomplished His purpose to make this impression.

How we see God in Christ.

§15. But when we perceive that Jesus means all this to us, we also see that the God who placed Him in the world, and who has brought Him into contact with us, is unwilling to give us up for lost, while at the

same time He knows and abhors our sin. It is no long-winded doctrinal argument, it is no dogma of the Deity of Christ that brings us to these thoughts; but they are the simple consequences of the fact that the being of that Man is a part of our existence, or that our very existence would be incomplete if He had not been, who is so rich that He creates trust in God in everyone who heeds Him. And having this trust, we are set free from the cares of the world, and our self-condemnation for our sin is outweighed by the sense of divine pardon. The question whether we shall become free and redeemed men depends entirely on the question whether we will consider this Man as an element in the realities of our being, and whether we will feed our hearts on that revelation of God which He offers us. Our thoughts wander away from the essential point when we raise the question as to what is the mystery concealed within Him which has made Him of such significance to the men who have come after Him. Many a man will find no time for such an enquiry, because of his honest application to the one thing whereby Jesus really redeems those to whom His inner life becomes manifest; that is, to the fact that Jesus makes the sinner certain of the love of a God whose will is the power that is in goodness. Jesus does this, and thereby and therein He makes us feel God's forgiveness. Here, then, it becomes clear beyond dispute that God Himself turns towards us in the Person of Jesus. *For God can only impart His forgiveness to us by turning Himself towards us, and thereby actually receiving us again into communion with Himself.* Hence we must of necessity understand the fact through which we experience God's forgiveness as being the point wherein we meet God Himself.[1]

The words, "Deity of Christ," simply express accurately what we experience in such redemption.

§16. Thus, in the work which Christ does upon us, we get a view of His Person which can only be expressed in the confession of His Deity. We come to understand Jesus to be the divine act of forgiveness, or, in other words, we see Him to be the

(1) Compare Luther, Erlangen Edition, xvii., 265: "The man now who so knows Christ that Christ has taken away from him all his sin, death and devil, freely through His suffering, he has truly recognised Christ as a Son of God." Compare L., 175: "But since no one can give eternal life but God alone it follows inevitably that Christ must be truly and naturally God."

message through which God comes into communion with us; and so we recognise in His human appearance God Himself drawing us to Himself.[1] This thought, that when the historical Christ takes such hold of us, we have to do with God Himself—this thought is certainly the most important element in the confession of the Deity of Christ for anyone whom He has redeemed. We do not reach this thought by way of a logical conclusion from that which we have experienced at the hands of Christ; but the experience itself is such that when we confess His Deity we simply give Him His right name. When we understand His Person, we grasp the expression God gives us of His feeling towards us, or God Himself as a Personal Spirit working upon us. This is the form in which every man who has been reconciled to God through Christ necessarily confesses His Deity, even although he may decline to adopt the formula. In Christ God turns to the Christian and is accessible to Him. This fact is simply summed up in the confession of His Deity. Hence it is impossible that this confession should ever vanish from the Christian Church. But the same words, by which faith confesses that it finds the highest good in Jesus, may also be used in an entirely opposite sense. Indeed, we cannot grasp the true meaning of the confession of the Deity of Christ at all unless we let that work take place upon us which God works by Jesus in the soul of every man who comes to himself. But we may, of course, have a confession of the Deity of Christ that spares us this experience with all its inward travail. This is the case when we content ourselves with assuming that behind the human life of Jesus, and in wonderful combination with it, there stands the substance of the Deity, from whose presence we may argue that the work and sufferings of Christ possess redeeming power. Certainly it is not comprehensible how anyone desires to make this assumption with inward truthfulness if he

Another remarkable passage occurs in xlii., 6, where Luther says that if we believe tha Christ gives eternal life, that is an "essentialis definitio," a definition of His nature.

(1) Compare Luther, Erlangen Edition, xx., I., 161: "When I thus imagine Christ, then do I picture Him truly and properly, I grasp and have the true Christ as He pictures Himself; and then I let go utterly all thoughts and speculations concerning the Divine Majesty and glory, and hang and cling to the humanity of Christ; then there is no fear there, but only friendliness and joy, and I learn thus through Him to know the Father. Thus arises such a light and knowledge within me that I know certainly what God is, and what is His mind."

expressly excludes the idea that we must experience the redeeming power of God through the influence of the personal life of the Man Jesus. But how easily all that is overlooked by anyone who regards it as of importance, for some secondary reason, to adopt the Christian confession! We shall see in a later section what sort of a soul a man must have who repeats a confession that is not his own, and asserts as a fact something which he has not found to be such. Our aim here is to show that such a conception of the Deity of Christ conceals from us what God desires to give us through Jesus.

This conception, against which we are thus complaining, is the conception found in the old dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. But does not our church also teach the same? It is a fact that the Reformation effected no change in this respect. Consequently, Protestant theology has done little to show the Protestant Christian that he cannot live on that conception of the elder church. It is true that rationalistic criticism has not failed to point out the contradictions involved in the old Christological dogma. But this has had an effect similar to that which the intellectual revival in Prussia known as the "Kulturkampf" had on the Romish Church. Criticism has not destroyed these relics of a bygone form of Christianity, but has given them a new lease of life. For that criticism denied altogether the truth of the Deity of Christ, and so caused all those forces of faith which absolutely require this idea to stream together in support of the ancient dogma which, at least, supports that truth. In laying bare the fatal inconsistency in the doctrine of the two natures in Christ, rationalistic criticism gives that doctrine the benefit of a support that helps indeed all thoughts that spring out of faith, namely this, that every such thought must seem utterly unreasonable to a non-religious thinker, unless it be deprived of its essential meaning. In the "Kulturkampf" of 18th century Illuminism the reaction against dogma was carried on with an honest desire for truth, but also with an astounding lack of effort to understand the nature of thought that springs from faith. The severity of that criticism has therefore given the orthodoxy of the Protestant people and

their leaders a similar look to that which the Prussian "Kulturkampf" has left behind in Catholic circles, for we find in both, on the one hand an earnest religious exaltation of tone, and on the other a deadening of the sense for truth and a certain primitive roughness of party spirit.

It is no part of our task here to try to mediate between rationalistic criticism and the popular orthodoxy which it has angered and thrown into confusion. No agreement is possible there. Each party requires the opposite side to fight against in order to justify its own existence. We must rather try to bring the opponents away to quite another ground, and to interest them in questions which cannot possibly receive consideration amid their party strifes. In this undertaking Luther can give us help.

CHAPTER IV.

LUTHER AND CHRIST.

Luther's reverence for dogma; and his advance from the older view of it.

§ 1. In Luther's position in regard to the Christological question nothing is so conspicuous as his enthusiastic loyalty to the old dogma. To adduce quotations from Luther's works in support of this statement would be quite superfluous. What A. Harnack has stated in detail on the matter is quite true, namely, that among that generation of theologians into whose midst Luther entered none treated the old church dogma so seriously as Luther. To others that dogma had become a sacred relic, honoured indeed, but having no higher significance for the inner life than that of a point of attachment to which an arbitrary and imperious fancy could link whatever activities or consequences and requirements it chose. To Luther, on the contrary, the dogma expressed what his faith had actually found in Christ, namely, redemption from trouble and sin. But while Luther read the old dogma in this sense, he combined with it thoughts of which neither its authors, nor those who used it after them, had any conception. These thoughts arose in Luther's mind of necessity, because his view of the salvation which Christ brought us was different from that of the elder church. He sought and saw in the Person of Jesus the fact that God was looking upon him with love, and was overcoming him; the same God, namely, from whom he had felt separated by his own sin, and whose power, in short, had been utterly hidden from him by the sense of his own miserable condition. The authors of the old church dogma never saw these things in the Person of Jesus; and many, many Christians now, who cherish the same way of thinking, never make that discovery. They believe that the Person of Jesus gives them something quite different, namely, nothing but the

certainty that blessedness is possible to them in the future, or, at most, the certainty that a communion with God could now be resumed. This is clearly something less than Luther had from Christ. When a fact that has become part of a man's own life is to that man a communion between God and his own soul, a communion that he had never hitherto cared about, then that man has something quite different from a mere doctrine that he may now be certain of the possibility of finding God once more.

It is also evident that only in the former case the man gets something from Christ which is a purely religious experience. Here therefore is something that has no existence except for the man who has this trust. For the idea that the conditions have been fulfilled whereby mankind may hold communion with God, can be established equally well by philosophical arguments which can be grasped even by a man who does not possess a religious trust. Just as little can it be gainsaid that we come into the most intimate relation to the Person of Jesus when we are able to recognise the approach of God to us in the power with which the personal life of Jesus draws us upwards towards God. On the other hand, the Person of Jesus recedes in interest from us when we see in the Divine Nature united with that Person merely the fulfilment of the condition required if fellowship with God is to be possible to us. The man who gets no further than this has certainly an idea, an undefined idea, of a Divine Nature, whose entrance into humanity appears to him to be a foundation for salvation; but when he thinks of what moved the soul of Jesus, he cannot make use of it as anything more than an example. He cannot rest his hopes of life upon it, for that alone is a foundation of salvation for ourselves, which works in the inner process of our rise to God as the power actually saving us.

Hence the attitude towards Jesus which Luther consciously held marks a step forward in the development of the Christian religion. We move forward in our Christianity only when the Person of Jesus gains a higher and more comprehensive significance for our own way of feeling and thinking, and when our thought concerning our faith finds expression in terms which

must seem meaningless to one who has not this faith, and which in his mouth would be untrue.

Luther's views as to the two natures in Christ.

§2. Among those new thoughts which Luther consequently combined with the confession of the Deity of Christ, may also be counted his well-known demand that the two natures in Christ of which the dogma speaks must be regarded as more closely united than men usually consider them. The usual view was a mistake, Luther declared, into which not only heretics but the "highest theologians" fell. He confesses that he himself formerly thought, to quote his own words, "I did well to distinguish the Deity and humanity of Christ one from the other."[1] A man who stood towards Christ as Luther did, and who, at the same time, held by the formula of the "two natures," was necessarily driven to advance at least to the demand mentioned above. He was obliged to protest against every Christology "which thinks of the deity and the humanity in Christ as being so externally united that we may look at the one apart from the other."[2] But Luther's endeavours to bring the two ideas of a divine and a human nature into closer union were in vain.[3] It could not be otherwise. Luther was thinking of the marvellous experience of faith, namely, the fact that Jesus compels us to see in Him God redeeming us; and this experience cannot be expressed by anything that our thinking can make out of the two ideas of a divine and a human nature. If such an expression were possible, then we should have to be able to see to the bottom of a mystery which in reality we can only experience as fact. So long as the Church had not come to see that redemption lies just here, namely, in one's own experience of the power which the Person of Jesus has over the soul, so long was it natural that men's minds should busy themselves with these two ideas. Constant pleasure in the effort to form some more suitable conception of the relation between the two natures gave a certain

(1) Erlangen Edition, xlvii., 362.

(2) Compare H. Schultz, "The Doctrine of the Deity of Christ," 1881, p. 201.

(3) Compare J. Köstlin, "The Theology of Luther," 1863; ii. 398 and H. Schultz, in the volume quoted, p. 204.

satisfaction to thought, and concealed the damaging defect that men did not rightly grasp the fact in all its reality on the possibility of which they were reflecting. Even the constantly evident fruitlessness of these attempts had a high value in the circumstances, for it kept alive the impression that here men had to do with an unfathomable mystery. Luther, on the contrary, had grasped the new thought whose position reveals the worthlessness of all this painful delving in a barren soil. And yet it was one of the marks of his significance as a reformer that he clothed the new thought in the forms of the old, and so he bequeathed it as a hidden germ to those generations which should only wean themselves by long mental exercise from the forms of thought employed by the ancient church.

Luther's strong sense of the Deity of Christ illustrated.

§3. What Luther found in the Person of Jesus cannot be fully expressed in the forms of the old dogma, for the Personal God who turns towards us in the human life of Jesus is something different from the God whose entrance into humanity has for its only result the combination of a divine nature with the human nature of Jesus. None the less does the new element in Luther's faith press to the front and find clear expression in his innumerable descriptions of what the believer means by the Deity of Christ. It goes without saying that the Deity of Christ was for Luther as much as for Athanasius the basis of his salvation. He writes "now if Deity be awanting in Christ, there is no help or deliverance for us against God's anger and judgments."[1] Again, "We must have a Saviour who is more than a saint or an angel, for if He were not more, better and greater than these, then there were no helping us. But if He is God, then is the treasure so weighty that it outweighs and lifts away sin and death; and not only this, but also gives the eternal life. This is our Christian faith, and therefore do we rightly confess: 'I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of Mary, suffered and died.' By this faith hold thou fast, and let heathen and heretic be never so wise, thou shalt be blessed."[2]

(1) Erlangen Edition, xlv., 315.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xlvii., 3-4.

Again, "We Christians need to know this: if God be not with us in the weighing scale, and He do not give the weightiness, then we sink with our little scale to the ground. Hereby do I mean to say, that if it could not be held that God died for us, but only a man, then we are lost."[1] In view of such words as these, which might be multiplied without difficulty, it would be strange if anyone should doubt that Luther rested his confidence in God on the Deity of Christ.

Luther's conception nevertheless richer than that of the elder dogma.

§4. But it is equally true that Luther had a richer conception of Christ's Deity than was expressed in the dogma of the elder church, as may be seen from the three considerations which follow.

In the first place, Luther does not content himself with the theory that there was a divine nature in Christ, and that its value was to give to Jesus' human work the weight necessary for our redemption. In a sermon on John xiv., 23-31, which was not published until the last edition of the summer series for 1543, we read as follows: "For the devil can bear it if men cling to the man Christ and go no further; yea, he will also let us speak and hear the word that Christ is truly God. But then he will not have it that a heart be able to connect Christ and the Father so closely and inseparably that it shall count His word and His Father's to be one word, heart and will. Just as darkened hearts do think and say: Yes, I hear indeed with what friendliness and comfort Christ speaks to the troubled conscience, but who knows how it stands between me and God in Heaven? That means, then, that the heart has not counted God and Christ all one, but has made for itself a Christ apart by Himself and a God apart by Himself, and has bartered away the true God, who wills to be found and laid hold of nowhere save in this Christ."[2] Here Luther is speaking of such as do indeed confess that Christ is truly God, but are nevertheless unable to take comfort from the friendliness of the Man Jesus. With such a confession of the Deity of Christ, he says, men

(1) Erlangen Edition, xxv., 312f.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 324.

remain a prey to the devil.[1] But, on the other hand, he believes that those are taken out of the power of the devil who are able to hear, from the friendly words of Jesus, how it stands between them and God in Heaven. Such souls do not distinguish between the mind and will of God on the one hand, and the message of the inner life of Christ on the other, because just in the latter do they find God letting them see His heart. Now, if the confession of the Deity of Christ is to have any meaning at all, it is clear that it must in any case mean that we connect God in our thought with the man Jesus. But Luther is not satisfied with simply thinking of a divine nature as bound up with the human nature of Jesus after the fashion which the church dogma supposes. That is indeed a connection of God with Jesus, but it is such a connection that it is quite possible to distinguish between God on the one hand, and the personal life of the Man Jesus on the other. Luther was conscious of something different from this: he felt that precisely in the revelation of the inner life of Jesus he had found God working upon him, and disclosing to him all the divine Mind. In this experience he knew himself redeemed; but he knew also that God will not let Himself be found in any other way, and so he believed that we miss the true God altogether if we understand by the Divine Being anything else than that Personal Will which works upon us in and from the appearance of the Man Jesus.[2]

(1) It has been said by "Lutherans" (see Th. Meinhold's book entitled "The Holy Spirit and His work upon individuals," 1890, p. 172) that the doctrine of the "two natures" is not made superfluous for Christian faith by the fact that the devil does not oppose it. For, say they, the devils believe in God, but we should certainly not wish to assert that therefore the belief in God is superfluous for the Christian. To this we reply that in any case the Christian does not need such faith in God as the devils may possess, or, rather, he certainly ought not to need such a faith. The Christian's faith in God means that, convinced by the revelation of God, he knows that he is surrounded by an Almighty love. And on this point any modern Lutheran may be convinced by Luther's Greater Catechism. Christian life simply is the constant victorious wrestling for this certainty. In such a strife the devils' faith, whatever it may be, can by no means help us, for the devils, with their sort of faith, never attain to the knowledge of God in His full reality, because the Father does not draw them to the Son. They must surely conceive of God as a violent and therefore diabolical Being, against whom they delight to rebel. Luther doubtless meant by these words of his that the thought expressed in the doctrine of the two natures, or the church dogma of the Person of the God-man, is not able of itself to produce the inner life of the redeemed. That bliss is wrought alone by the knowledge that in the inner life of Jesus we grasp the very mind of God Himself as love poured out upon us. This knowledge was certainly not expressed in the dogma, as we well know. Of course, Luther did connect the two, the dogma and this knowledge, as I willingly grant my opponent, but the question is whether that redeeming knowledge is to be obtained only when we have first professed faith in the church dogma. This will be affirmed by every one who is tied to that Catholic kind of faith which does not trust in the redeeming power of the Man Jesus, who conquers the sinner's heart, but on the contrary ascribes redeeming power to doctrines which any man can appropriate without ever having his heart renewed. We deny this, for our redemption rests on the fact that we find God in the Man Jesus.

(2) In the periodical, "Beweis des Glaubens," for 1891, A. Kohlrausch has undertaken the task of dealing with a number of these quotations from Luther, and deserves thanks for

Luther's discussions of the Deity of Christ do not always bring to the front this main principle on which the truly Christian meaning of the idea depends. He speaks, as a rule, rather of the confession of Christ's Deity as the sum of all that a Christian believes without emphasising that momentous significance of the idea. But if anyone refuses to grant that for Luther the great matter was that he found God in the man Jesus, then such refuser must have expressly determined not to see it. To show this, let the question simply be asked whether it is likely that such a man as Athanasius could have written the following words: "This is the first principle and most excellent article, how Christ is in the Father: that we are to have no doubt that whatsoever that man says and does is counted and must be counted said and done in Heaven, for all angels; in the world, for all rulers; in hell, for all devils; in the heart, for every evil conscience and all secret thoughts. For if we are certain of this: that what He thinks, speaks, and wills the Father also wills, then I can defy all that may fight and rage at me. For here in Christ I have the Father's heart and will."[1]

trouble. He comes to the conclusion that our use of Luther is jesuitical. Others must judge whether he be right, and we will, in any case, thank him for pointing out some few mistakes which he will find corrected in the present edition. But his belief that Luther merely repeats in its entirety the Catholic conception of the Deity of Christ very certainly drives him to do violence to Luther's words, as may be seen from his treatment of the passage just quoted above (p. 119). He declares, namely, that Luther only meant by these words to say that neither the confession that Christ is only man, nor the confession that Christ is only God, is sufficient. Kohlrausch's own words are: "In this passage Luther insists only that we shall conceive of the two natures as united in Christ" (p. 261 of periodical named). Now, nothing whatsoever is said in the passage of a confession that Christ is only truly God, but Luther is speaking of such as move forward from a strong conviction of the humanity of Christ, and are willing to assert in addition that Christ is truly God. And what Luther wants is not what Kohlrausch supposes, viz., that men should simply conceive the two natures to be united; the Reformer felt that we must count them united in such a specially intimate way as shall include, for those who do think of the connection, the consciousness that we are actually divinely redeemed by Jesus, or that God's grace is here actually poured out upon us. Whoever does see or realise the connection of which Luther speaks, knows how it stands between himself and God in Heaven. Now let us ask: Does this "knowledge" of being redeemed come to any man step by step along with the man's grasp of that conception of the two natures which is expressed, for example, in the creed of Chalcedon?

Now let us remember that Luther, in making his demand, never once mentions the two natures, but speaks only of the Persons of Christ and of the Father, which reveal themselves in word and will. Luther's mind is that when a man finds and grasps the speaking and acting of the Father in the Person of Christ, as that Christ reveals Himself in word and will, then that man has in himself the marks of redemption. Does the elder dogmatic doctrine of the two natures lead us to grasp the Person of the Father in the disposition which Jesus manifested towards men? Surely it rather prompts us to distinguish all Jesus' words and deeds on the one hand from the divine nature on the other hand, which alone gave to those their effectual value. It is the direct opposite of what Luther expressly demanded; hence our assertion is correct that Luther, in these and similar utterances, rises above that conception of Christ's Deity which the dogma expresses. We will not dispute that Luther often does use the confession in the old dogmatic sense, and that in true Catholic fashion he describes assent to it as a condition of redemption, but we deny that Luther never rose above that position. We will not examine closely any other specimens of Kohlrausch's treatment of our quotations, for his criticism is in general quite as hasty as in this case.

(1) Erlangen Edition, xlix., 183-184.

According to the conception of Athanasius, the fact which procures salvation is the union of the divine and human natures in the Person of Christ; and Luther certainly did not give up that view, but he deepened it and perfected it. For he did not speak simply of divine nature in general, but he spoke out his own experience, to wit, that the personal life of Jesus gave him a certainty of God and a vision of the divine nature, and that we have God before our eyes and in our hearts only when the mind and will of Jesus lay hold of our hearts, and we understand them to be the power that is greater than all the powers of evil. Luther got beyond the indefinite thought that with the entrance of Jesus into the world the Divine Essence came into the most intimate union with the human race, or with human nature. He bids any and every individual soul experience for itself that in the Person of Jesus the Personal God Himself is exerting His love and His creative power upon such particular individual.

Of course, the thought which the old church dogma expresses may be inferred as a derivative corollary from this experience. For let any one stand in such a relation towards Jesus that the reality of this Man in history touches him as the redeeming action of the Personal God upon his own soul, then such an one cannot help thinking that the divine and the human nature are united in Jesus in spite of the contrast between them. And there may also spring from this fact the impulse to reflect upon the way in which the union was accomplished. Luther did not indeed think much of this tendency to reflection, for he says: "As for the man who will not hold fast by the Word, but wants to be subtle and to reckon up how it can sound correct that God and man are one Person—let him go on and be subtle and reckon up, and see what he gains by it. How many a man has become a fool by all this!"[1] Perhaps Luther himself is not wholly free from blame for the fact that the tendency he thus tersely describes has grown apace even in the Protestant Church, and has matured such fancies as the modern theory of Kenosis. And yet even his doctrine of the Incarnation had

(1) Erlangen Edition, xix., 15.

far richer contents than that of the Greek theologians had, who meditated upon the possibility of a union between the divine and human natures, and formulated their dogma as the norm for those speculations. Luther was fully conscious that the knowledge which he had won was far superior to that less definite knowledge on which the dogma is based; he says of the Popish Church, that although she had loyally preserved the dogma, she never imagined "that we ought to learn to recognise God in Christ."[1] Those Christological heretics against whom the elder church had fought were by no means the worst of heretics in Luther's eyes. He thought that rather to be the worst heresy which distinguishes between the disposition of God and that of Christ."[2]

Second note of greater richness in Luther's Christology: Trust in the Deity of Christ is to Luther a confidence, which is life, in Christ.

§5. The second point wherein Luther's idea of the Deity of Christ is richer than that of the elder dogma is the following. Luther, as everyone will admit, repeatedly emphasised the fact that then only do we believe in Christ when we base all our confidence on Him, and so live through Him. He saw and said that "to believe in Christ does not mean to believe that Christ is a Person who is both God and man, for that helps nobody."[3] This sentence does not mean, of course, that to Luther the thought of the union of the divine with the human nature in the Person of Jesus was useless. For, indeed, he held rather the conviction that when we behold that union as a fact, we no longer live without God in the world, but are redeemed. Luther can only have meant that there is a kind of belief in that union which is worthless. Now what are we to understand thereby? We might take him to mean that a Christian must believe, not only in this, but in something else in addition, and Luther himself gives occasion for such a conclusion. In the very passage just quoted he continues: "But that the same Person is Christ, that is, that for our sakes He came forth from God, entered into the world, left the world

(1) Erlangen Edition, xlix., 126.
(2) Erlangen Edition, l., 197, 198.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xii., 163.

again, and went back to the Father. This is as much as to say: herein is His Christhood. that for us He became a man and died, rose again and ascended into Heaven; by reason of such office He is called Jesus Christ; and to believe concerning Him that such is true, is to be and to remain in His name." Here it seems to be clearly stated that in addition to believing that Christ is a Person who is both divine and human, we must also believe that "the same Person" fulfilled His office for our sakes. And yet, however often Luther may give us occasion to suppose this to be his meaning, his idea cannot have been entirely this. For if the right belief in the Deity of Christ needed such a supplementation, then that belief could not be the actual laying hold of the God who is working upon us to our saving, and this is what it was in Luther's opinion. Just because Luther thought so highly of belief in the Deity of Christ, he cannot have thought it needed supplementation in any such external sort.

Again, this is impossible also for the further reason that when Luther expressed his faith in the Deity of Christ, he did not find it needful to add to the thought of the Person of Christ any special reference to His work. The Person of Jesus meant to him the mind and will of God turned towards himself, and this was only visible to us in the historical work of Jesus, *i.e.*, in His "office."

Certainly Luther often said that belief in the Deity of Christ without reliance on the work of Christ is worthless. But when he speaks thus, he means always a belief in the Deity of Christ that is of itself of a wrong sort. It is a sort of faith, as Luther thinks, that lacks the very characteristic whereby you may recognise the right faith in the Deity of Christ. Many persons imagine that they follow the Reformer if they first resolve to think that a divine nature is present in Christ along with his human nature, and then add to this an additional resolution to have confidence that the work of this Man has redeemed the sinner. They even venture to assert that this disposition of theirs which they have brought about by their own resolutions, has been wrought in them by the

Holy Spirit. Now Luther directly refuses to have anything to do with so empty and untruthful an undertaking, and this, thank God, we may know for certain. We have only to watch what Luther understands by that trust in Christ and in His work without which belief in Christ's Deity is to him worthless. Trust in Christ means to Luther the actual experience of redemption. And it can have that same meaning to us only when it is accomplished by no undertaking of ours, but is created in us because the man Jesus has made us feel the power and grace of God turned towards us. In such case we experience the rise of this confidence as a very transplanting into a new life; and then only does it follow that we give up all attempts to satisfy our craving for fellowship with God by our own effort. Luther counted that the readiness to give up all such attempts was the real evidence of right faith in the Deity of Christ. In a sermon on Matt., vii., 15-23, which Enders conjectures to have been delivered on May 1st, 1525, in the church at Wallhausen, Luther contrasts the faith in the Deity of Christ which redeems with that faith which the devil is quite willing to see; he says: "There are many of you who say, 'Christ is a man of this kind: He is God's Son, was born of a pure virgin, became man, died, rose again from the dead,' and so forth; *that is all nothing*. But when we truly say that He is Christ, we mean that He was given for us without any works of ours, that without any merits of ours He has won for us the Spirit of God, and has made us children of God; so that we might have a gracious God, might with Him become lords over all things in heaven and on earth, and, besides, might have eternal life through Christ—that is faith, and that is true knowledge of Christ."[1] He speaks of a confession of the Deity of Christ which does not mean a confession that we have eternal life through Him, and he says that this is the sheep's clothing of the false prophets. Such a confession, he declares, is suffered by the devil and practised by the Pope. He contrasts with this what it really means to know Christ truly; and without any doubt we may take it that by true knowledge of Him he means the knowledge

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiii., 251-2.

of His Deity. To him, then, true knowledge of the Deity of Christ is identical with the certainty that through Christ we have a gracious God, that we are lords over all things, and that we have eternal life. Then in what follows he goes on to concentrate this great truth in the proposition that only then do we possess true knowledge of Christ, *i.e.*, of the Deity of Christ, when we are entirely delivered by Christ from all desire to gain fellowship with God by our own works. He is well aware that the Pope knows how to teach beautifully concerning the work of Christ, and of how eternal life has been procured for us thereby; but he thinks, on the other hand, and rightly too, that when Christ has brought a man so far that in his craving for fellowship with God he relies no longer on his own works, but on that alone which he finds in Christ, then that man has the true knowledge of Christ. For in reality we do so rely upon Christ when we find for ourselves in Him the Personal God who reveals to us His own inner self, and when we so experience God's coming into communion with us. Until we reach the true knowledge of Christ, we shall of necessity be always trying of ourselves to find some way of securing fellowship with God.

This richer conception of the Deity of Christ which Luther attained, stands thus inseparably connected with the newly-gained comprehension of justification by faith alone. The one is impossible without the other. When we think it our duty to confess the Deity of Christ before we have found in the man Jesus the God who redeems us, we are attempting to base our soul's happiness on our own work, and must therefore deny the truth of Luther's doctrine of justification. It is indeed utterly impossible to make that doctrine clear to a man who has not found the communion of God with his soul in what he experiences at the hands of Jesus; but the most complete departure from that doctrine takes place when, in order to secure salvation, a man puts on the sheep's clothing of the false prophets, or, in other words, professes to believe in the Deity of Christ before he has found redemption in the Man Jesus. In the passage above quoted, Luther concludes by saying: "Wherefore I warn you once more, and bethink yourselves of it when I am dead, that

you look well to their doctrine whether they preach Christ aright; that is whether they do not attempt to do some of God's own work instead of Him. Look well, and you shall see."[1] The present leaders in the Protestant Church, on the contrary, seem intent on nothing so much as to insist that they must "attempt to do some of God's work for Him," namely, must prepare a confession of the Deity of Christ which is to be subscribed in order that we may be saved. But Luther's Reformation doctrines only countenance such a confession of the Deity of Christ as springs naturally to the lips of the man whom Jesus has already made blessed.

Third point of superiority: Luther's idea of the rise of faith in the Deity of Christ.

§6. The third point of superiority of Luther's view over the elder dogma is this. In Luther's time all who claimed to be Christians confessed the Deity of Christ as a matter of course, much in the same way as nowadays most of us agree in believing that the earth revolves round the sun; and Luther himself usually employed the forms of expression which really belonged to this customary belief in the Deity of Christ. Hence the fact is the more surprising that he nevertheless could raise and answer rightly the question as to how belief in the Deity of Christ arises. Those who believe in the Deity of Christ as a matter of custom never ask this question; they simply say over to themselves the original doctrine, which it never occurs to them to dispute. Whoever did not agree with it would be making "shipwreck of the faith." Now, as a rule, Luther's method is simply to quote the texts which, according to traditional exposition, testify to the Deity of Christ, to set them together, with the teaching of the fathers alongside of them, and then to infer from these the doctrine that Christ was very man and very God in one.[2] But these discussions of his are frequently interspersed with

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiii., 253.

(2) The objection was raised by many against this treatise in its first edition that we had ignored this fact. We willingly admit that our exposition might give occasion for the objection; for it had not been our intention to give a complete description of Luther's way of teaching, but only to collect those of his ideas in which he departed from Catholic usage while treating of his communion with God. It is difficult, however, to understand why this complaint has been lately repeated, after our declaration in reply to Luthardt, that we certainly agree with Luther the Reformer, but not with Luther the schoolman.

traces of his new recognition that the Deity of Christ means more to a believer than the mere presence of divine substance in Jesus. And sometimes Luther goes into the question as to how that belief in the Deity of Christ arises which is not simply an easy assent to traditional doctrine, but is a wonderful experience that entirely regenerates a man. When he does this, he always gives an answer which confirms our view of his new conception of the Deity of Christ. If the Deity of Christ does not simply mean that a divine substance underlies the human life of Jesus, but that the personal God Himself turns toward sinners and opens His heart to them in that human life, then belief in Christ's Deity can only arise out of that which the Man Jesus brings about within us. We might easily be persuaded to suppose that a divine substance was bound up with the man Jesus, and in any case we might be persuaded of this without troubling ourselves about the man himself, or experiencing the power of His personal life over us. But, on the other hand, the certainty that the personal God Himself lets us feel His power and His mercy through Jesus can only arise within us when the personal life of Jesus has such influence over us that we must believe it and be certain of it. It would be a senseless undertaking to attempt to lay firm hold of the true Christian thought of the Deity of Christ if we did not feel ourselves to be held by the power of such a fact as we have described. It is possible for me to speculate on the general idea of God without difficulty, but it is not possible in that sort of way to gain confidence that God Himself as a personal Spirit actually comes near to me, the individual, and turns His mercy towards me. In order to believe that, I need some fact wherein the reality of God shall testify of itself to me, and wherein also His grace as actually directed towards me shall touch me to my knowledge. Luther was convinced that the Scriptures lead us in just this way to the knowledge of the Deity of Christ. He says, "Therefore we can have no certain proof of the Deity of Christ unless we enfold and enclose our hearts in the sayings of the Scriptures. For the Scriptures begin very gently, and lead us on to Christ as to a man, then afterwards to a Lord over all creatures, and

after that to a God. So do I enter delightfully and learn to know God. But the philosophers and the all-wise men have wanted to begin from above; and so have they become fools. We must begin from below, and after that come upwards."[1] Undeniably Luther raises here the question how we can have a sure foundation for our belief in the Deity of Christ, and gives as answer that only the man Jesus lets us recognise God, and that therefore He alone can establish in us a certainty that in Him we have to do with God Himself. And just as he here distinguishes the true knowledge of Christ's Deity from the false knowledge of the worldly-wise men, who want to begin with the presupposition that Christ is God, so also he does elsewhere. "But to know Christ in the other and true way means to know that He died for us, that He heaped my sins upon Himself, so that I hold all my own affairs to be naught, let go all that is my own, and cling only to the faith that Christ has been given to me, and that His sufferings, His piety and His virtues are altogether mine. When I know this, then I must hold Him dear in return, for I must be loving to such a man."[2]

Here some theologians, like R. Kübel,[3] will say, of course, that Luther doubtless means that we can only have all this in Christ if we start from the presupposition that He is truly God. But Luther follows up the words just quoted thus: "*After this* I rise up from the Son to the Father, *and see that Christ is God.*" Kübel is certainly right in maintaining that Luther regards the vision of Christ's Deity as the very kernel of Christianity; but for a man who takes that view the question may very well arise how we get at that kernel. Even Kübel will admit that Christianity is not so light a matter that we may expect everybody to make its kernel his own without any difficulty. Luther, at any rate, was aware that the true knowledge of Christ's Deity can only arise where the sinner, in his longing for fellowship with God, is enabled to go thoroughly against his own nature and give up all trust in self. When Christ redeems us

(1) Erlangen Edition, xii., 412.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 249.

(3) Compare the Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, issued by G. Holzhauser, 1891, p. 47.

from ourselves, then we see God working upon us in Christ's Person. Luther did not hold to the dream that we are able to make the idea of the Deity of Christ our own so as to become redeemed, that is, that even as unredeemed men we can make the idea ours.

To Luther the act of believing in the Deity of Christ was no simple matter; it was an art. "Hence it is an art so to recognise this King, that He is true God and man." Thus the question how we are to reach the knowledge of the Deity of Christ attained, in Luther's eyes, an importance which, as it appears to us, every earnest Christian of our own day must come to feel far more keenly. He did not count himself relieved from considering this question by his certainty of Christ's Deity, for he knew that as a living Christian he had to wrestle for this certainty every day anew. There is one particular discussion in which he expresses his certainty thus: "Wherefore it is our boast and our glory that we know that this King is not only true man but also true God"; but he breaks this declaration off with the warning: "Yet especially must we first begin thus, and first grasp that first beginning, that He was born in Bethlehem, and then after that go on to the other result.[1] Luther believes that if we take this course "it will follow of itself" that Christ came forth from the Father. Our opponents urge that if we would experience the saving power of Christ, the only true method, and the method too, they say, that Luther followed, is to approach Him with the presupposition that He is the Son of God; but this is definitely declared by Luther to be the practice of the worldly-wise, who begin from above to build the roof before they have laid the foundation. No picture could exhibit more clearly than this the difference between that which forms the foundation of our faith on the one hand, and that high idea of the Deity of Christ on the other, in which thinking concerning our faith reaches its climax. Luther says, in his exposition of the fifth Psalm,[2] that Christ first works upon us as the King who delivers us from ourselves, and draws us to

(1) Erlangen Edition, xviii., 178.

(1) Erlangen Edition, opp. ex Lat., xiv., 181-2.

Himself; this He effects by His humanity. Hence Christ must be apprehended first as man, and only then as God; but the man Christ to whom we cling will Himself bring it about that He shall appear to us as God.[1]

Luther is also able to tell us why it is so hard for a devout person to take this course. He says it is hard for the flesh, for the flesh always prefers to think of the Deity of Christ rather than of the man Christ, because it shrinks with horror from the entrance into glory through the cross. Let us remember that for Luther Christ is the only true God, and that when he speaks of a becoming filled with divine benefits, and expects such from the mighty working of the power of this God, he is speaking of the rise of faith in the soul, and it is evident that his assertion quoted above means that our flesh is always trying to make our religious experience easier than it is. In reality, we can only find God when the man Jesus overcomes our souls, so that in His execution and death we recognise His kingly power, and experience its work upon us. This is not pleasant to the flesh, and hence the sinner is always trying to avoid that experience, and to talk unhesitatingly about the Deity of Christ as though he were able to know of himself what that name, "God," means, or as if he could learn its meaning by simply repeating words after others.

Luther keeps the old dogma, but with quite a new meaning. (i.) He finds God in Jesus; not so the dogma.

§7. Thus Luther desires to hold fast by the old dogma, but none the less he puts a new meaning into it. In the first place, he claims that he finds the Personal God Himself in the personal life of the Man Jesus. It was not necessary that he should here be conscious of breaking away from the old dogma, for what he demanded might certainly be regarded as the strongest possible assertion of that union of the divine and human natures to which the old dogma bore witness, and Luther actually so regarded it. Nevertheless he did depart here from the original meaning of the dogma, for according to its original meaning, it did not deal with the recognition of the

(1) "Christus homo habitus Christum Deum sponte sua adducet.'

Personal God in the human appearance of Jesus, but with a presupposition of a divine nature underlying that appearance. The conception of the divine nature which was used in this latter case was formed quite independently of what we experience of the Person of Jesus; and the effect upon us which was supposed to follow from the union of the divine nature with the human, had nothing to do with our conscious inner life.

(ii.) Redemption is entirely God's act upon us; not so in the dogma.

Secondly, Luther read a new meaning into the old dogma thus: he held that the true recognition of Christ's Deity is inseparably connected with an entire cessation of all our efforts to gain redemption by any act of ours. But the recognition of the Deity of Christ which is expressed in the old dogma, implies, on the contrary, no such resignation; there has always been bound up with it the idea that the individual must perform a certain operation which God demands from him, in order that he may enter into possession of those riches which have been made accessible for all mankind by the incarnation of God. And it cannot be otherwise, for it is in no way possible to adopt the ideas of the dogma, and at the same time to give up all effort to secure one's own salvation. The man who seeks salvation will stop trying to help himself only when he knows that God has helped him. Now such knowledge and certainty are implied as already possessed by such as Luther would consider to be aware of the Deity of Christ, but that certainty is not implied as possessed by all who profess the dogma.

(iii.) The human life of Jesus has a new interest; none is needed for the dogma.

Thirdly, Luther reads a new meaning into the dogma, for his understanding of the Deity of Christ gives an interest to the human life of Jesus which the dogma utterly failed to give it. We can busy ourselves with the ideas of the dogma without troubling ourselves about Jesus, whereas we cannot confess Christ's Deity as Luther confessed it without experiencing in ourselves the power of the Person of Jesus.

Thus there can be no doubt, when we take these peculiar

ideas of Luther's own into account, that to Him the Person of Jesus was of far higher importance for the inner life of religion than it was when viewed from the old dogmatic standpoint. With Luther the Person of Jesus stands in the very centre of the religious experience itself. Jesus makes him certain of God, lets him see the divine nature and life, becomes to him that manifestation of God's grace in which God enters into communion with him. He knows that he has been lifted up to God, and he traces the power of Jesus in that fact; he sees God, and he finds in the infinite power which presses in upon him nothing different from the personal life of Jesus. Viewed from the old dogmatic standpoint, all was different. Then the Person of Jesus was not the medium through which a devout soul beholds God and experiences God's working. Then the Person of Jesus is of importance for the inner process of religion itself, and for the uplifting of the heart into the felt presence of God, only in so far as it serves as an admonition and an example. This admonition and that example may indeed be valuable, yet they place the Person of Jesus only on the outer threshold before the door of that sanctuary wherein the communion of the soul with God is to take place.

Every truly devout person seeks to lay hold on God Himself in his own religious experience, and therefore if we understand by the Essence of God anything else than the inner life of Jesus, then we get away from Jesus altogether in our moments of religious exaltation. Is that the course of religion to which the New Testament bears witness as the true one? Or do we not find that there the control of God and the rule of Christ in our souls are equally described as the highest good, without any distinction being drawn between the two? But the confession of the Deity of Christ which the dogma demands presupposes precisely this: that the Essence of God is something quite other than the inner life of Jesus, and is to stand assured for us quite independently of the Person of Jesus. Thus the dogma necessarily thrusts the Person of Jesus out from that very position within our religious experience which alone can give any meaning to our words when we speak of the Deity of Christ.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE ESSENTIAL DEITY OF CHRIST.

Is the predicate "deity" of real importance? Two replies to the question. (i.) The mere name is not very important.

§1. When we thus defend Luther's ideas concerning the Deity of Christ, we are met with the objection that the predicate, "deity," as we use it, has no clear meaning as applied to Christ, and that therefore we had better lay it aside.[1] To this objection we reply, (i.) in the first place, that we do not set much store on the mere name, "Deity of Christ,"[2] but that our highest interest is rather to arrive at such an understanding of the *Person* of Christ as shall make us actually certain of our redemption, *i.e.*, as shall assure us of a real communion with God in spite of the trouble and sin with which we have to fight. Now this assurance we have attained, because we have learned to understand the fact that Jesus' entry into our life to judge and bless us is the act by which God lets us know Himself and draws us to Himself. Our keen critics may say as much as they please about our still lacking the one thing needful,—we have through the man Jesus all that we need, and we know that to long for anything higher is to fall away from the highest, it is to deny Christ, and to harden our hearts against that which is good. We know that in Christ we meet with God, and we know what sort of a meeting this is; we know that this God gives us comfort and courage to face the world, joy in facing the demands of duty, and with all this eternal life in our hearts. He who has already found the actual fact of this God in Christ, thinks it indeed a strange suggestion that he must start by presupposing God to be in Christ if he would enter correctly on the way of salvation.

(1) See Lipsius, "Philosophy and Religion," 1885, p. 308.

(2) Cf. Erlangen Edn., xlix., 21, 151, where more stress is laid upon the divine power and work of Christ than on the divine name.

(ii.) Second reply: our view of Christ's Deity alone justifiable in Protestant Christianity.

§2. But in the second place we affirm that in the Protestant Church no other conception of Christ's Deity is justifiable except that to which we adhere, and that therefore we alone have a good right to use that expression which our opponents would forbid to us. The general proposition, that God came to us in the historical appearance of Christ, requires various interpretation, just according to the particular view which is taken of the redemption that Christ brought. If we understand by redemption our equipment with certain powers of everlasting life, of whose nature we have, however, no clear conception, and if our entry on possession of these powers is not to be realised in any conscious process of our inner life, then it will be quite sufficient to express Christ's significance as Redeemer by the statement that the substance of the Deity was present in Him, and that this has worked upon human nature to produce its restoration and enrichment. In that case such an expression suffices, because the indefinite conception of what redemption is demands no more definite conception of the presence of God in Christ. When, therefore, Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa, following this old Catholic view of redemption, expressly deny that redemption is the inner deliverance of the sinner from the burden of guilt, it is easy to see how they could rest content with the confession of the Nicene Creed that there was a divine nature in Christ. They defended from their standpoint the honour of Christ against Arianism, and the generation in which they lived might very likely have their faith strengthened by the theological speculations which went on as to how a divine nature could exist in Christ alongside of His human nature.[1]

(1) Nevertheless, even at that early date there were not wanting some who felt that the necessity of entering into these speculations was a burden imposed upon the Church by faithless heretics. Compare Hilarius Pict., "De Trinitate," ii., 2:—"Compellimur haereticorum et blasphemantium vitiis, illicita agere, ardua scandere, ineffabilia loqui, inconcessa praesumere. Et quum sola fide explorari, quae praecepta sunt, oporteret, *adorare videlicet patrem et venerari cum eo filium, sancto spiritu abundare*, coginur sermonis nostri humilitatem ad ea, quae inenarrabilia sunt extendere *et in vitium vitio coarctamur alieno*, ut, quae contineri religione mentium oportuisset nunc in periculum humani eloquii proferantur." And again, in vii., 38:—"Non relictus est hominum eloquiis de dei rebus praeterquam dei sermo. Omnia reliqua et arcta et conclusa et impedita sunt et obscura. Siquis aliis verbis demonstrare hoc, quam quibus a deo dictum est, volet, aut ipse non intelligit aut legentibus non intelligendum relinquit." If our opponents will compare with these passages an utterance of Augustine's which is equally candid (De Trinitate, vii., 4, 9), they must surely doubt their right to denounce our abandonment of that sort of speculation, as though we were shirking the highest problems and robbing Christianity of all its meaning, when these very speculations were so condemned by their own classic authorities.

But the Reformers, on the other hand, had gained another and a clearer view of redemption, and hence along with this they were necessarily led to another view of the presence of God in Christ. They had become convinced that only those can live the life of the redeemed who have some measure of certainty of their redemption. Now such certainty can never spring up simply because we presuppose that a certain person is equipped with supernatural power, which equipment is moreover entirely concealed from our consciousness; but, on the contrary, it does arise from the vision of a fact, when the understanding of that fact is always accompanied by a complete change in the inner life, accompanied, in other words, by a re-arrangement of our conscious relation towards God. According to the teaching of the Reformers, this renovation of the inner life is faith, *i.e.*, it is the reliance of the repentant sinner upon God, brought about by his understanding of Christ. Certainty of redemption is, of course, connected with faith as thus conceived, for such faith is redemption itself. Thus we find it stated in the "Apology," ii., 62:—"Haec fides in illis pavoribus erigens et consolans accipit remissionem peccatorum, justificat et vivificat. *Nam illa consolatio est nova et spiritualis vita.*"[1] This faith has for its correlate, as the Apology explains (ii., 50-52), the "promissio Dei," and just as the latter counts upon the faith of men, so faith can extend to the good news of the gracious mind of God. All the various items enumerated in the Reformers' Confession of Faith point to objects of faith only in the sense that they work together to bring about the "finis historiae," that is, the forgiveness of sin. In other words, these must be means of expressing the gracious will of God, who is seeking to awaken in the heart of the sinner the trust that will set him free. Thus the man who shares that need of redemption which the Reformers felt, will certainly not expound that most important object of faith, namely, the presence of God in Christ, by the mere statement that in Him the divine substance was united with human nature. We might indeed calculate upon its substance, or argue from its existence—that

(1) Compare Luther, Erlangen Edition, vii., 159:—"And Christ redeems us *through this faith* from all unrighteousness, makes us free once more, that we may live divinely and heavenly, which we could not do before in our prison of unrighteousness."

suits the Catholic conception of our need for redemption, which seeks safety, not certainty—but to place confidence in it is impossible. This winning of trust, this peculiar power which works amid the moral intercourse of persons, enters into us only when the will of some person lays hold of our inmost being, and quickens our life by giving us a free intimation of its own intention.[1] Hence the Protestant Christian, who can stand before God with the confidence of a child, must have found in the Christ, to whom he owes that relation to God, not some mysterious divine substance, but a living power, acting upon him, overwhelming him and announcing to his soul the will of the Personal God. In Jesus, as His historical work shows Him to us, we have before us the inmost will of God, to which everything is subject, and we experience it to be a power constraining and emancipating our souls.

We teach herewith the essential Deity of Jesus: The dogma does not.

§3. Now, of course, our opponents tell us that this is not confessing the Deity of Christ; for, say they, we admit that only when we presuppose that in Him there is the substance of the Deity. Lipsius demands therefore, in the work quoted above, that we shall speak only of a Revelation of God in Christ. But that expression is liable to misunderstanding; it might be thought we meant that through Jesus we only have teaching concerning God. Jesus certainly does give us that teaching, but that is not the way in which He saves us. For He is our Redeemer because He Himself compels us to understand the will which is active in His work to be the mind and will of God, of that God who comes near to us in order to draw us into communion with Himself by the touch of Jesus upon our life. The question whether we are right in speaking of the Deity of Christ when we have found God turning towards us in the disclosure of Jesus' personal life, must be decided according as we conceive God to be in His nature a substance on the one hand, or on the other hand a Personal Spirit who asserts His nature by the energy of a will directing itself toward certain ends and preserving in itself a certain

(1) On this point compare Kähler in "The Atonement through Christ," 1885, p. 26.

disposition. If we choose the former conception of God, then certainly the proposition that there is divine substance in Christ will be chosen as the proper expression of belief in His Deity; but if, on the contrary, the latter conception be followed, which is clearly the only one represented in the sacred Scriptures, and the only one permissible in the Christian community, then it is self-evident that the Deity of Christ can only be expressed by saying that the mind and will of the Everlasting God stands before us in the historically active will of this man. The other interpretation of the Deity of Christ is in any case a departure from the Christian idea of God. It was excusable in an age when the Christian community had not outgrown that meagre conception of redemption with which the great fathers of the fourth century were content. It is endurable when employed in discussing the theological question—a superfluous question, certainly—as to how a union of God with man is possible; it is endurable if we couple with it, as Luther did (see the passage quoted above), that it is not the thought in which the redeemed has life and which the devil cannot bear. But when in the Protestant church the Lord's people are taught, by those who are counted their proper leaders, that this is the only possible expression for the Deity of Christ, then that knowledge is rendered impossible without which no one ever enters into communion with the Living God; and this is done for the sake of a conception which anyone can adopt, without having redeeming faith at all. We will not doubt, of course, that many, who, as theologians, are enthusiastic adherents of the formal doctrine of the "two natures," are yet, as Christians, able to find the God who is working upon them in the Man Jesus. If we may try to account for such men's inability to use this their own living utterance of their own God-awakened faith as the source of their knowledge and estimate of the Deity of Christ, perhaps the explanation lies in their giving too little regard to the fact on which, in every instance, Christian life is based, the fact namely, that we are compelled to regard the entrance of Christ into our life as an act of God upon us. If we only bear this in mind that faith in Providence, or that "fiducia dei" which alone deserves the name of faith, arises within us in the way just

described, then it will not be a difficult matter for us to apply the method of judgment which we follow in that case to the historical appearance of Christ, and to behold in Him the Living and Working God. Any theological opponent, in so far as he is a Christian, will surely admit that we stand thus towards Christ in a relation of the greatest conceivable dependence, and that we find in Him something the possession of which prevents us from being embittered and wounded by the hatred and calumny of men.

Our conception of the Deity of Christ is certainly different from that of the dogma.

§4. We by no means deny that our conception of Christ's Deity differs from that expressed in the dogma. We rather regard the difference as being of the greatest value. That difference, to put it briefly, is the following :—

That conception of the Deity of Christ which is expressed in the dogma, can only be asserted in the form of a scientific theory. On the other hand, in religious practice, in other words, in the actual uplifting of the heart to God, the dogma's idea is necessarily put aside, and this has always been the case. The religious practice which accompanied the undisputed rule of the dogma was mysticism. That worship of the Man Jesus which went on at the same time, had nothing to do with the reverent bowing of the soul before God; it was therefore only a mere accompaniment to the religion, and it did away with the Deity of Christ rather than confirmed it. Quite the opposite is the case with our view of the matter, for with it we can have what Luther demands respecting Christ and the Father: "in our heart and faith they must be entirely one."[1] Our view makes it possible that "the recognition wherein He and the Father are recognised is one recognition." With our attitude towards Jesus it becomes possible to look on God and Christ as one in the Christian's religious experience. On the other hand it is not possible to describe the unity of Christ and God, which we experience in our faith, in terms of any previously established conceptions of divine and human nature. This impossibility arises from the fact that we first know what Divine Nature is

(1) Erlangen Edition, xlix., 126.

when we apprehend it in Christ. For as God is none other than that Personal Spirit, who comes spiritually near us in the existence in this world of the Man Jesus, and who thus compels us to think of Him as the Lord who holds in His grasp both ourselves and that infinite realm by which our life is conditioned. What do we lose by our inability to support a fact, which we experience in its awakening of our confidence, by a scientific theory which any one might adopt without any such awakening of confidence? Certainly we do lose the ability to make that fact quite accessible to a man who has no such confidence. But that is not a fault; for we all expect that the man who turns his back on the Person of Jesus, shall and ought to continue to call the marvellous fact in which our confidence rejoices the meaningless cobweb of a dream. Whoever undertakes that task which we have thus seen to be impossible, ventures on a profanation of what is divine.

The dogmatic idea of the Deity of Christ is an imperfect effort at reflection, and is injurious.

§5. For the very reason, then, that we believe in the Deity of Christ in the fullest sense of the term, we must reject the dogma concerning it as an utterly inadequate effort at thought. Luther's attempt to combine the correct idea concerning Christ's Deity with the dogma proved to be an impossible task; for among those who claimed to be imitators of Luther, that correct idea has been lost sight of, and deductions from the dogma have been developed which make it impossible to preserve that idea. For Lutheran circles are raising to the dignity of a first and foundation principle the proposition that we must confess Christ's Deity before we can possibly experience the divine work of redemption through Jesus. Luther, on the other hand, did indeed hold by the Christological dogma, but at the same time always asserted that we find the Living God in Jesus Christ alone. If Luther was right, and indeed he *was* right, then that main principle of modern Lutheranism just cited is untenable. If I am to speak of the Deity of Christ, then God Himself must already have become a reality to me. But He only becomes real to me when He lifts me to Himself. He does this through the Man Jesus, and when this act of God revealing Himself, namely

Jesus, gains power over our inner life, we are redeemed. Hence modern Lutherans require men to regard as a condition of redemption that which is really its result. The injury they do in this way is no mere trifle, for the men who follow their advice are playing with the Holiest. They speak of God as a reality before their souls have been uplifted to God. In that case their hearts must starve. They hide from themselves the fundamental truth of all religion, namely, that the redemption of a mortal being can mean nothing else than its being lifted up into fellowship with the Everlasting God. This is the fate to which the practice ruling at present in the church is bringing those who would be devout. Or are we, in saying this, once more doing our opponents an injustice? They tell us, aye, unceasingly, that we must first know that Christ is very God before we can possibly be redeemed by Him.

Grounds for excusing the mistake of present-day dogmatists.

§6. Nevertheless we can partly excuse such procedure by the following considerations. (i.) In the first place, a man who has been lifted up by Christ to God and received into fellowship with Him, will say ever afterwards to his soul: Thou couldst not have had that experience through Him, had not God appeared to thee in Him. Eternal life is the gift of God alone. How easily may this thought lead to the error of supposing that we must know that Christ is God before we can have eternal life through Him! (ii.) In the second place, we say with truth that we are to find in Christ something inexhaustible, which shall be constantly assuming a new significance for our lives. "What I believe is always more and greater than what I have experienced." (Kübel, in the Theol. Litt. Bl., 1891, No. 12). And so, when we say that the inner life of Jesus is itself the power of redemption, it may appear as though we are setting something which our poor experience can compass in the place of that immeasurable magnitude which the church finds in Christ. We can certainly understand how, led by such a reflection, some persons may turn away from the correct doctrine and practice on this most important point; and we can excuse them if they do so. But it is easy to show that here is a

misunderstanding; for we are to learn the mysterious and overwhelming power of the Divine Being only in and through the phenomenon of the inner life of Jesus. The man who thinks he can exhaust that fact and become master of it, will never, of course, bow to the sovereignty of Christ. But even though we can thus find excuses for the procedure of our opponents, we none the less regret that procedure. For it hides from men the truth that to come into personal communion with God through the appearance of Jesus is to experience the marvellous fact of redemption.

"Now what I have said means this: that God will not suffer us to rely upon aught else, or to cling at heart to aught that is not Christ in His Word, however sacred and spiritual it may appear."[1] God so touches us that He lifts us above our trouble and our sin, so that we become certain of Him when we come to understand the historical Christ, and only then. Hence we come into contact with God only through the word that makes such understanding possible to us; and so we must receive the Person of Christ Himself as the tidings of God in which He desires to come near us.

(1) Erlangen Edition, xi., 27.

CHAPTER VI.

OF GOD'S COMMUNION WITH THE INDIVIDUAL.

What is immediate contact of the soul with God.

§1. At this point we may revert to that objection of our opponents in which they assert that since Christ brings us to God, therefore there must be an *immediate* communion of the soul with God, of which that fact forms the basis.[1] This assertion is particularly interesting for the reason that it lets us see plainly how far the acknowledgment of a divine substance in Christ is from the true confession of His Deity. If, after a man's experience of Christ, he still feels that he lacks and must obtain an immediate communion of the soul with God, then, evidently, that man is unable to apprehend and feel God to be in Christ: and he who is unable to do this ought not to claim to be an orthodox believer on the ground of any dogmatic formula, however venerable it may be; the fact is he is not a believer, for he has not found God in Christ, but distinguishes between God and Christ in the way which Luther, in a passage quoted above, ascribes to "the foolish unreasoning heart." If God, in bringing Christ near to the individual soul, gives to that soul the full tidings of what is in God's heart, and if He thereby gives the soul clear vision and peace, then He makes that soul feel His own Almighty power, and deals with such a soul in the most direct and intimate way possible. A more immediate contact of the soul cannot be conceived or wished for, save by those who do not think of their God as a Personal Spirit but as an impersonal substance. The Personal Spirit communes with us through manifestations of His inner life, and when He consciously and purposely makes us feel what His mind is, then we feel Himself.

Hence we must utterly reject the idea that God can in any way come nearer to the individual soul than when He lets Himself

(1) See page 89.

be found in Christ. Here the difference between us and our opponents becomes quite clear. They conceive of the Deity of Christ in such a way that they only use Him and His work as a presupposition before their communion with God; they think that this presupposition holds good indeed for all cases alike, but that in addition to the presupposition, and over and above it, every individual must strive for himself to come into immediate contact with God. Such a desire for God is quite justifiable where men have been accustomed to contemplate the Christological dogma instead of fixing their attention on Christ Himself: but of a surety it also leads men into uncertainty. It is to us incomprehensible how men can appeal to Luther in support of such a position, for Luther saw in the historical Christ no mere presupposition fulfilled centuries ago in order that ever afterwards men may become Christians. He writes: "To me it is not simply an old song of an event that happened fifteen hundred years ago; it is something more than an event that happened once—for it is a gift and a bestowing that endures for ever."[1] And when we read in the same connection: "through this we are so profoundedly taught, that we know what God's will is, and what God has in His heart," Luther does not mean some knowledge concerning God which may be held as a general truth apart from the historical deed of Redemption, but he means that everyone whom this deed touches and brings to himself experiences therein exactly what God purposes concerning him and is producing in him as an individual soul.[2] I do not need to remind the reader how very often Luther repeats the assertion that every Christian has this experience of being set free, amid his own particular surroundings, when the figure of Christ comes face to face with him through the preaching of the gospel. Hence the Reformer can say: "Nothing which takes place in ourselves and of ourselves can make any man a Christian. What then can make us Christians? This alone, that we know this Man, and that we

(1) Erlangen Edition, xx., I., 114; ., 241.

(2) In the Erlangen Edition, I., 241, Luther says that the faith that Christ was sent of the Father into the world amounts to this:—"That thou shalt esteem and hear without question every word that fell from His lips as though thou heardest now the voice of the Father speaking with thee from heaven."

receive from Him and expect from Him what He wills that we shall receive at His hands."[1]

The Christian smiles at all claims to private revelations.

§2. When the Christian experiences this at the hands of Christ, and sees that thus God Himself lays hold of him and makes him feel there is a special divine care over him, then he listens without concern when anyone claims that God and Christ have entered the realms of his imagination in forms distinct from that historical event, and that they so commune with him. Luther knew the language of that Roman Catholic piety which can talk of such experiences with the Bridegroom of the soul, and he even used it sometimes; but he gave it a new and Protestant meaning, as we shall see later on. The strength of the man lay herein, that it was in the actual world that he found the God who talked with him, and it was there he sought for God. That other sort of seeking and finding God within the realm of the pious fancy was thoroughly well known to him from his monastic life; but he was aware that there the soul supports heaven, not heaven the soul. "God made His Son one with human nature in order that we might discern and know in Him God's friendly will towards us;"[2] the man who knows this will hold by the voice of God only as it speaks to us in this fact, and will not try to make God speak within his soul in any other way. "Therefore I say: I will hold by His common revelation to all men in the word and works of Christ."[3] As monk, Luther, like the rest, crept into a corner and thought that God would work for him "something all his own."[4] Later on he came to see that "parties" indeed "claim to hear" a secret voice and a revelation;[5] but that the Christian hears the speech of his God in facts that speak plainly to all men.[6] Luther did indeed give abundant testimony to his faith that Christ lived and worked in him, and we shall discuss later on, in Book III., the correctness and value of this idea that springs from faith: but

(1) Erlangen Edition, xii., 50. (2) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 228.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xx., I., 29. (4) Erlangen Edition, xx., I., 414.
(5) Erlangen Edition, xv., 151.

(6) Monachi celebrant patrum suorum Benedicti, Bernhardi legendas. Sed profecto Deus in genere cum quovis Christiano multo copiosius loquitur et *familiarius conversatur*, quam illi jactant de suis patribus. Imo si in manu mea res esset, non vellem, Deum mihi loqui de coelo, aut apparere mihi. Hoc autem vellem, et tendunt hoc quotidianae meae preces: ut in digno honore habeam et vere aestimem donum Baptismi, quod sum baptisatus, quod video et audio

no one will venture to prove by this that Luther, as a Protestant Christian, made out of this experience any peculiar communion between himself and the risen Christ. On the contrary, Luther was aware that we find the true Christ and experience the direct influence of our risen Lord when we come to understand the Christ of history. It was not Luther's mind that a Christian, who has drawn the necessary teaching from the historical work of Christ, may then turn his back on those facts and seek to reap from them a harvest peculiar to himself in a special communion with God or with the risen Christ within the sacred quiet of his own inner life. On the contrary, he would have thought that in so doing he would be departing from the realm of real, life-giving power. "For the man who lets go of Christ's life and work, and desires now to seek Him as He sits in heaven in some private way, betrays Him afresh. He must seek Him as He was and walked on earth; then shall he find life; it was there He came to be our Life, our Light, and our Blessedness; it was there that all took place that we are to believe concerning Him."[1]

There is a sense in which God communes with each soul in a special way

§3. Nevertheless there is an element of truth in the insistance that God must come to each individual soul in a special manner, even though He comes near to all through the same fact. For each one of us finds himself in an inward condition peculiar to himself when God appears to him in Christ. Those things and events which open up the understanding of Christ for any particular individual must necessarily have special modifications according to the circumstances of the particular case. We must necessarily take into account all the circumstances connected with the influence of Christ upon the soul in our observation of the accomplishment of the act whereby God comes into communion with us. Hence it is true to say in this sense—but only in this sense—that God communes with every individual soul in a special way; or, in other words, as men prefer

fratres, qui habent gratiam et donum spiritus si, qui consolari, erigere verbo possunt, exhortari, monere, docere. Quam enim tu optas meliorem et utiliorem Dei apparitionem?—Luther's Latin Works, iv., 157-162: compare lvii., 45; 51.

(1) Erlangen Edition, x., 189; compare xxxv., 170f.

to say nowadays, that God enters into a personal relationship with each individual soul.

Our environment by the church.

§4. The first relation of life to be considered, wherein the Christian traces the redeeming act of his God, is our environment by the church. God cannot disclose Himself to all men without distinction; He holds indeed the guidance of every life in His hand, but He can open His inner Self only to such as are in the church, *i.e.*, in the fellowship of such as trust in Him. Our experience that the gospel helps others gives us also an ability to accept it for ourselves. Hence when Christians interest themselves in us, Christ comes near us. The proposition that the church is the mother of believers is not understood in its true sense until we think of her, with Luther, as "a Christlike, holy people,"[1] and not as an institution which possesses within itself certain mysterious redemptive powers. When we live in the midst of Christian people the sense is awakened by which we may see God in Christ, and the germ of understanding is nourished. When we ourselves have found our God, and so have become new men, then we are linked with Christians in fellowship, not only by our joy in that fellowship, but also by the life it gives us. It is this power of bringing our new life into being that gives to the Christian church its name of "mother."[2] And since we see that in her alone do we meet with the Creator and Redeemer,[3] she becomes to us an element in that divine act by which we know that, in the midst of this world, we have been set within the Kingdom of God. But we can be certain that God turns to us through the church only in so far as the latter so preaches the gospel that we are enabled to receive it and to lay hold on God. The church enables us to do this in so far as it is that fellowship of believers which enables us to lay hold of the Word of Christ, through direct preaching in the first place and, in the second, through Christian life. Without the second the first is of little use.

(1) Compare the Greater Catechism and the Erlangen Edition, xii., 50; xxv., 354.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xlvi., 278. Here Luther says, in talking of the new birth:—"Christ does this, who, by baptism and the Word of God, lays thee as a Christian, in the lap of the Christian church, as of our dear mother."

(3) Erlangen Edition, xxiii., 238.

The second important environment wherein God communes with us is "Christian persons."

§5. Hence, if we wish to remain in communion with God, we must remain in communion with Christian people, who make us feel their moral severity towards themselves and their love towards others. Through this moral communion with Christians we enter a realm of peculiar experiences; we experience more and more clearly how forlorn our condition would be if the personal life of Jesus were not a reality in the world, and standing there before our eyes. Hence it becomes evident also that a church which does not develop such fellowship of moral intercourse is lifeless and dead. In the events wherein a believer experiences this two-fold influence of the church, he sees of necessity the special communion God has with himself, and with no other individual. It is certainly highly important that every one of us should seek and have for himself the certainty of this special communion God will give to each.

These utterances of God thrown away by a certain theory of the saving church.

§6. The possibility of all this vanishes just in proportion as we regard the church, not as the instrument of that gospel which saves us when it is understood, but as the enclosure containing certain mysterious redemptive powers which are to save us when we undergo their operation. The church, in the former sense of the word, exercises her redeeming power over us when believing Christians give us their sympathy and care; for these are counted worthy as believers to represent God speaking to us, and thus to open to us the Kingdom of God. But the church in the latter sense, on the other hand, is supposed to do all its work by means of indefinite divine powers which are presupposed to belong to the ministerial office and its acts. In this latter sense the church necessarily loses all its significance as an expression of the speech of the Living God; she rather thrusts herself in between Him and us, and leads us to the worship of a dumb idol, to wit, the redemptive power concealed within herself.

Luther's mind on this.

§7. But "we have a God who speaks and lives, who gives us His sure Word;" and we know how He is disposed towards us and what we are to expect of

Him.[1] We are surrounded by the Christian church, which brings the tidings of Christ into our hearts in a thousand ways; and this environment becomes to us an evidence, when we understand its tidings, that God desires to assure us of His grace. The man who accepts this testimony of God that is uttered for him knows hence that he is lifted into a realm where God's grace will continually reveal itself to him, and will remain immovable, even if he fall into sin: "Just as the sun rises daily in the heavens, and does not only drive away the night that is past, but goes ever onward and lights up all the day, even though he be somewhat darkened and hidden by thick clouds."[2] To see that God communes with him thus is certainly the matter of utmost moment for each individual Christian. That "peculiar exercise" amid which Luther in his monkish life enjoyed richly what was supposed to be communion with God, did not make him a Christian. For this alone makes a man a Christian, "that his faith lays hold of and knows this point, that he dwells in the kingdom of grace, since Christ has taken him beneath His wing, and gives him the forgiveness of his sins without ceasing."[3] The fact is, as Luther says in the passage already quoted, that the Christian can never even wish that God should specially appear to him or speak down to him from heaven. He receives the revelation of God in the living relationships of Christian brotherhood, and its essential contents are that personal life of Jesus which is visible in the Gospel, and which is expounded by the lives of the redeemed. If he has really found God thus, he will desire with all his heart that the God who has already appeared to him may come ever nearer to him, and that he himself may ever experience more deeply, in his own growing clearness and firmness of moral purpose, that God is redeeming him.

The official priest robs.

§8. The importance which the church has for the Christian as a fellowship of believers, must remain unknown if the false claims of church officials deprive any other believers of their priesthood, whereby all of them are

(1) Erlangen Edition, ix., 203.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xi., 320.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 211.

the organs of God for their brethren. Hence Luther says, in the passage just quoted, that such hierarchical claims do not simply injure Christians in a matter of privilege, but that these claimants rob them also of God, of the Gospel, and of the faith. For the assurance of God's grace is limited by such claims to a single official act, and so loses its certainty. The forgiveness of sins is not to be counted as given in and for a single moment, namely, "when the absolution is pronounced; but it is to be a continuous, eternal treasure and an everlasting grace which works and is mighty always."[1]

Third means of God's communion with us: All the events of a Christian's life.

§9. Whenever the church thus makes the divine act of revelation, that is, the Christ of history, an element of our present life, then all the events we pass through begin to utter the speech of God. First among these stands all that directly helps in the preaching of the Gospel. "Therefore God appears thus to me through His Word: item, I apprehend Him in baptism; item, God appears to me through the schoolmaster, through my parents, through preachers, through His Word; item, in the Absolution."[2] But the light which thus enters the soul throws its radiance necessarily over all life's course.[3] In all our providences we recognise the earnest pressing in upon us of that love of God, whose reality and meaning are made certainties for us by Jesus Christ in His work for the eternal kingdom of God. The very same events which lead men who have no faith into a pathless desert, shape a way through life for the Christian to his well-known goal, as he sees it growing definite before him amid his various moral responsibilities and experiences.

Fourth means of God's communion with us: Life in the morally necessary or the Infinite.

§10. That experience which, in the light of Christ, we have learnt to count as a work and word of God for us, has the power to make us rejoice in what is eternal, and so brings us actually to live in it. For God, who of His nature desires the good,

(1) Erlangen Edition, xi., 319.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xx., I., 27: xlvii., 222.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xlix., 90, 196. God sends trial "that He may reveal Himself to us the more, that we may know His love. For such trial and conflict are to teach us (what preaching alone cannot do) how mighty Christ is, and how truly the Father loves us."

gives to us a token of His loving care for us herein, that He makes us feel at home in that which is good, *i.e.*, eternal, and makes us able for that self-denial which is laid upon us by our sharing in eternal life. The Christian ought in all experiences, great or small, to grasp a Love, and know he is supported by a Love that he recognises more and more clearly to be the power of the Eternal Good. In this inner process he feels himself touched by the Infinite, fed by it and certain of it, and all this as no mystic ever feels such things. For the emotion of the mystic, however sweet and mighty it may be, has nothing to do with the eternal in its relation to our inner life, that is to say, with the supreme motive of life. For this reason it is impossible for the pious mystic to gain any such assurance of an inward truth as cannot possibly be buried and lost altogether amid the alternations of excitement and reaction. But we, on the other hand, may become certain of God and of His communion with us, for nothing can ever blot out the historical fact to comprehend which is to feel God's nearness in all the relations of our life; and again, the inner use of that historical fact lifts us up into joy in the God and so to a share in the Eternal. In our comprehension of Christ, and in the new meaning of all our experiences which that comprehension makes possible, we become certain of the fact that God touches us. It is not to be supposed that the difference between mysticism and our way of experiencing the communion of God is that only the mystic believes that he can feel himself inwardly grasped of God. That experience is obviously the Christian's greatest joy. Indeed, so true is this that it can be said of Christians, in Luther's words, "that even if they knew that there were no heaven, no hell, and no reward, even still would they seek to serve God for His own sake."[1] We differ from the mystic solely in the way in which we become aware that God is touching us. To the true mystic God is the eternal as opposed to the temporal, and hence the mystic enjoys his sense of possession by God when he has such an exalted sense of the eternal as makes him feel the charm of a wonderful calmness of spirit as over

(1) Erlangen Edition, xxii., 133.

against the unrest of the life that feeds on this world. We also have such experiences, and hold them in no light esteem; we believe that in them we are aware of the incomprehensible glory of God. But we do not find in them that communion of God with us which is all-important in our eyes. For to us God is not the eternal itself, which inspires us and humbles us; but He is the Power who rules both the eternal and the temporal, and who brings us, men who live in time, to a life in the eternal. Life in the eternal is laid open before us when we understand moral necessity: and we share that life in the eternal when we choose with joy, and so of our own free will, to do what is morally necessary. The Power that helps us to do this is our God.

It is not in the eternal itself that we find the God who turns to us with abundant help: it is in that process in time which makes a life in the eternal possible to us. Whether in this case the inner life is richer than one lived in blind devotion to the infinite, and whether it means more to men to live in the eternal or to disappear before its presence,—these are questions on which we shall never agree with the advocates of mysticism. One thing, however, is certain: the former is Christian, and the latter is not. And yet the prevailing theology of our time persists in joining forces with mysticism: otherwise it would appear devoid of all religious contents. For whatever may be the secret attitude of heart towards God amongst those theologians, their theological theory does its utmost to conceal the fact that in the Christ of history God so touches each one of us that we may apprehend His reality and comprehend His love. Before any mention is made of the Redeemer, without whom for a Christian there is no God, modern theology erects altars to a deity whom we are supposed to know from metaphysics and from detached texts of Scripture. To such an image of deity, which the reason has constructed, the soul is expected to struggle upwards of itself! From everyone who becomes a slave to this kind of worship, the figure of Jesus withdraws into the far distant past. Jesus Christ is God present for us, surrounding us with grace and compassion, only when we give

to Him the glory that in His appearance, as it stands before us in the gospels, we see God's approach to us and God's presence with every one of us. Thus far, unfortunately, in German Christendom, official dignity and esteem are accorded to a theology which tells the people now unacquainted with its Luther that we deprive Christianity of all its worth if we make the simple confession that the man Jesus is God appearing in history and redeeming us! And at the same time this official theology itself, which evades the confession of the Reformers, which openly gives up the old dogmatic doctrine of Inspiration, and which will not admit that the Person of Jesus Christ is simply and solely the authority for our faith,—this official theology nevertheless poses as the defender of the faith because, with art and difficulty, it binds together the conflicting elements of tradition. So long as such "scribes" rule, so long will mysticism remain necessary as a crutch and substitute for Christian piety. For mysticism is certainly true religion in this sense, that it aims to bring men into fellowship with God Himself. But the man who has found Jesus Christ, and God in Him, can dispense with mysticism, for in the narrow experiences into which mysticism dwindles there is no room for real Christian life.

And another means is fellowship with all true religions.

§11. The chief end of every real religion is to secure God's communion with each individual soul, and every devout man knows that he himself cannot bring about that communion, but that God does it for him. This act of God is that revelation on which the reality of all religion rests.[1] In the soul of the man who stands amid such revelation religion is established; and that participation in the divine life, towards which our religious longing yearns, consists in a man's becoming conscious that he means something to God, and that God is entering into communion with him. He who does not admit these propositions to be true does not know what religion is. We feel that we have something in common with all who show that they understand religion thus, whether they are Christians or not.

(1) Compare my address on "The meaning of Revelation," Giessen, 1887.

Conclusion.

§12. But these persons can only become Christians when they lay hold of the inner life of Jesus in that report which has come down to us in the Christian brotherhood. When they learn to see Him, then they are at once set free from mere dependence on that report, and move on to the firm ground of personal experience. For this personal life works upon the man that is at all able to see it, in such a way that it confirms for him the contents of the report. The man who feels the strength of Jesus' love, and sees that confidence of victory which welled up from His peace of soul, and who is startled and humbled by these,—that man will no longer see a historical problem in Jesus, but a Reality before whom he bows. This is all-important if a man is to become a Christian. For Jesus would not be the Redeemer if He could not help the man whom He Himself had so overwhelmed by the strength of His inner life; but He does so redeem us, and that by compelling us to see in His existence in the world the reality of a God whose Presence made Him, Jesus, glad and confident, even when He was utterly forsaken of all others. We can know of ourselves that we stand in the midst of an incomprehensible infinity, which brings on suffering that we cannot alter; but the Person of Jesus alone can give a man the invincible certainty that it is the almighty power of His Father in heaven which rules in the boundless world. And if the Person of Jesus so works upon us that we cannot think of Him without thinking of God, then inevitably His existence and His influence over us will appear to be the working of God upon our own souls. Thus God reveals Himself to us. In the man with whom God enters thus into communion, there arises a new inner life. He turns to God with the consciousness that he is doing a thing which was impossible to him before, and he has the experience constantly renewed that the God whom He has found in Christ is making him a new creature. He learns to grasp thoughts concerning God and Christ, concerning the world and himself, whose meaning was previously hidden from him, although, perhaps, he had often heard them expressed. And all this new experience is based on the fact that in the Person of Christ that which is

truly above nature has entered the world, and is now lifting us above it. But this knowledge that He alone can loose our bonds and make us from mere elements in the world into sharers of divine life, would all be simply concealed from us if, instead of looking at Him, we should give ourselves up to the sway of an indefinite conception of an "influence of the supernatural." That which is truly above nature is disclosed to us only when we experience Jesus' power to make us certain of God.

BOOK III.

OUR COMMUNION WITH GOD.

CHAPTER I.

WE COMMUNE WITH GOD IN CHRISTIAN FAITH.

God's aim fulfilled.

§1. As God comes near our souls by giving us tidings of His love towards us, even so do we, on our part, turn to Him by giving Him tidings of our inner life. These tidings are given by man to God in prayer; in the awaking of the voice of Christian prayer God's purpose to draw us to Himself is fulfilled. When prayer dies in us, then the soul closes itself against revelation. Prayer is the expression of human need before God, the expression of satisfied need in the prayer of thanksgiving, and of need still felt in the prayer of supplication. From this we might seem to get the rule that the Christian is to turn towards God by telling Him all trouble and thanking Him for all help received. Yet, self-evident as it may seem that such is to be the Christian's use of prayer and such his experience, we have by no means fully and correctly described the Christian's communion with God by saying this.

Where is the God we pray to?

§2. If prayer is not to be simply the cry of agony from a helpless man, but a real communion with God, then it must have direct relation to the fact that God turns towards us. The Christian must know well the fact that he wanders away into emptiness if he tries to find and lay hold on God outside of his own actual historical circumstances, in some realm of fancy. But if this be true, then supplication is not the first fact in the Christian's turning towards God. To quote Luther, "Before thou callest upon God or seekest Him, God must have come to thee and found Thee."[1] By his own efforts a man may become a praying man, but not a Christian.[2] The Christian grasps God because God has grasped him, and it is only in prayer breathed out of this experience that the Christian can be certain that God hears him

(1) Erlangen Edition, x., 11.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 135f.; xiv., 335.

and answers the cry of his soul. The supplication that is wrung from the heart by trouble, and the idea, born of the wish of the tortured soul, that an Almighty God will break the chain of causes and effects,—these are not the elements which make Christian prayer. The most important feature is lacking. A prayer that contained nothing more than these would clearly be no communion with God, since the utterer would certainly not be in the presence of God. He would be alone, alone with his fears and wishes, making simply an uncertain venture if perchance he may accomplish anything by the inner travail of his soul and by his concentration on the object of his desire.

We cannot begin with prayer.

§3. On one condition certainly, supplication might possibly be the first thing in our communion with God. If we could perceive God with the senses, if we actually grasped His reality in all its relation to other things, and knew Him by His ways towards other persons, then it would have some meaning to say that our communion with Him might begin in the form of supplication by us. We could then begin relationship with Him with a request, just as we often do thus approach our fellow men. But we cannot see God with our bodily eyes: neither does the story of what He has done for others make us acquainted with Him; hence there can be no meaning in the supposition that the communion of the Christian should begin by supplication. Of course many Christians take the reality of God as a self-evident fact, and they consider this to be an advantage, and a sign of their immovable piety. So it becomes possible for such to begin their prayer with a request, and to count on a time of thanksgiving in case the prayer be answered. But at the same time they put themselves, with their immovable piety, among those men whose nature Jesus hated from the bottom of His heart, namely, among the hypocrites. Let us consider what would really be implied if the reality of God were a self-evident fact for us. It would mean that everything which presses itself upon our conscious-

ness, whether we will or not, impresses upon us the idea of God just as clearly as it impresses upon us the idea of an actual world. Now we are always taking the reality of the world into account; our hopes and fears are all linked to what we know of it. How, then, would it fare with us if the reality of God had this same power over our inner life, if that reality determined our feeling and shaped our resolutions in exactly the same way? We only need to put the question before us to see that the assumption that the reality of God is a self-evident fact, even to a Christian, is a miserable fiction. The man who has become entangled in it cannot come near to God, for we cannot do that in falsehood, but only in the truth. Yet on that assumption rests the view that the Christian can turn to God by first addressing supplication to Him.

Our communion must be in the realm of the morally infinite.

§4. The fundamental features of Christian piety must depend on the way in which God appears to us in Christ and works upon us. Now the God whom we feel laying hold of us when the appearance of Jesus becomes an experience of our own, is that power of goodness which throws down with victorious love all the barriers which divide us from what is good. Hence Christian piety can only arise in the field of men's moral experience. We come to understand what the need is from which God seeks to save us, and what the good is which He seeks to impart to us, when we are awakened to the inexorable claim which moral goodness has upon our lives. According to the preaching of Jesus, our life with God takes place in a kingdom of God, which Jesus Himself brings; but this kingdom is presented only where there is pure love in persons and for persons. This means, however, also that it is only in an inward yearning towards this kingdom of God that there can be any turning towards God Himself, or any enjoyment of His goodness.

Now this thought of Jesus, although it is so simple and clear, has not ruled the teaching of the church as it should

have done. On the contrary, its claim has been essentially weakened by the weight of a mystical tradition, according to which a man is supposed to attain to the vision and enjoyment of God by action which is not necessarily connected with moral purpose at all. To souls burdened by such tradition the thought of Jesus seems to lack warmth, and the charm lent by imagination which would be to them the pledge of His truth. Even to-day, in the Protestant church, we are met with the objection that we are only talking dry morality, because we follow Jesus' direction and claim to recognise a fitness for establishing this same kingdom of God as the divine element in those works of God whereon we are to rest our faith.[1] And yet it should not be a difficult matter for any earnest seeker after truth to agree with that idea preached by Jesus, for every Christian knows at heart that moral claims are rightly greater than all others within him. Just here, then, is the sign that we are to seek communion with God, not as something alongside of devotion to what is good, but exactly in this devotion. Indeed, every other leaning of our souls is proved to be a merely temporal thing by the fact that it must inevitably yield in importance to the claims made on us by this eternal law. We share therefore in the life of a God who is above the world, and we are actually lifted above the world ourselves only when our inner life is moulded according to that law. Our aim must be to live in that eternity which we human beings can understand, namely, in the eternity of the morally good. Otherwise our desire for God lacks truth, for we do not seek God Himself at all, but only His help in temporal matters. There is no true search for God without those painful conflicts which the desire for eternal life causes every child of nature, and if we have no joy in the sovereignty of the eternal over the temporal in the realm of moral conduct and order, there is no true finding Him.

(1) Of course we know that no one grasps the full meaning of that kingdom of God which Jesus claims to bring if he includes in it only that personal intercourse which is regulated by the moral law. An equally necessary element in that kingdom is the sovereignty which God exercises through Jesus in such a fellowship. The personal fellowship in which men are united by love, and the sovereignty which God exercises therein through the Messiah, are both to be included in the idea of the kingdom of God.

The Reformers declare that we can be perfect only in fulfilling our calling.

§ 5. The Reformers advanced these same thoughts in another form in their doctrine of repentance, and in their principle that moral life in our ordinary calling is an essential part of Christian perfection. The Reformers declared in that doctrine that the Christian faith is not understood by those who are without temptation, but only by those who know what agony of conscience means; and herein they imply that only amid the great needs of moral life can we have the sure experience that God helps us. This principle must be kept clearly in view; we must not let it be clouded by any discussion as to whether repentance, as the experience of moral need, precedes the rise of faith or follows its awakening. In any case, God can only reveal Himself to those to whom He makes clear what is good, and whom He causes to feel the constraint of the truths that the good alone has power, and that they are sinners. From this it follows that the Christian can only turn to God and experience God's help while he is occupied in truly fulfilling the duties of his own calling. The doctrine of the Reformers that repentance is a necessary element in the Christian life is supplemented by their principle that the calling of a citizen is no hindrance but a positive necessity to Christian perfection. Even if this principle were not expressly asserted in the well-known passages in the Confessions, countless utterances by Luther would show how anxious he was to impress it upon men's minds. He insists unceasingly that "God will have Himself served in common life and common rank, not by fleeing from the same."[2] And the argument for this is that it is just in the work of his calling, whereby the Christian helps and serves others, that he is a consecrated priest and bishop, and therefore communes with his God.[3] When a man withdraws from his worldly calling he ceases to take part in God's eternal work, and puts a human work in its stead, a human work that is worthless because it is arbitrarily chosen, and lacking in all reverence for what is truly necessary. "For

(1) Compare Erlangen Edition, xxvi., 8f.; xxvii., 49; also Augsburg Confession, viii., 25.
(2) Erlangen Edition, ix., 81.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xxi., 283.

who is the better for it, that thou enterest a cloister, makest of thyself a thing apart, and will not live like other men? Who is helped by thy cowls, thine austere countenance, or thy hard couch? Who comes thereby to the knowledge of God, or to comfort of conscience? Or who is provoked by these things into love for his neighbour? Nay, how is it possible for thee to serve thy neigbour and show him love, humility, patience, and meekness if thou wilt not live among the people?" "The Christian life, on the contrary, the life of faith and its fruits, is so ordered that all serves to maintain love and unity, and further men in all virtues."[1]

The Roman Catholic and mistaken idea of perfect life with God.

§6. We do not see the full significance of these assertions of Luther's unless we remember that their purpose was to do away with the Roman Catholic ideal of Christian devotion. Luther's opponents set up the rule that everything which binds a man to the world, and therefore also the work of his calling, separates him from God, and therefore ought to vanish as far as possible from the life of a perfect Christian. Certainly, when Luther opposed that view by including in the requirements for Christian perfection that a man must have a worldly calling as the only possible means of fulfilling his moral duty, he did not mean that a Christian would become more perfect if he allowed worldly affairs to withdraw him for a time from communion with God. His idea was rather that just in bowing to moral obligations we turn ourselves to the divine. Luther's intuitive genius, which enabled him to grasp the original meaning of the Gospel, and the greatness of the work he accomplished, are shown nowhere more clearly than at this very point, where he certainly had not a clear insight into the scriptural ground for his ideas, namely, the preaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God.[2]

In the middle ages the soul's craving for God had found its nourishment either in thoughts on the infinite or in pictures drawn by fancy of a self-abasing God which led the soul to

(1) Erlangen Edition, ix., 280-9; cf. x., 26; 413-4.
(2) Cf. Ritschl. Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versohnung, 2nd edition, iii., 11.

expect a sensuous communion with Him. In both these cases piety necessarily forbade as far as possible all connection of man with the world, and therefore threw off the moral tasks of life, except where these could be regarded as ascetic mortifications of the flesh or as praiseworthy imitations of the poverty of the Christ. This kind of piety is certainly intense and full of warm feeling, and so is quite able to enchain and intoxicate men; but it fails to create any stronger bond of union between them than that of an accidental similarity of emotions. Consequently its experiences do not hold good for all men, and therefore they have none of the nerve of certainty. Those thoughts and pictures are constantly fanning the feelings, and so they are quietly nursed; but they never lift the soul into that realm of the eternal where it knows itself linked to all men. Ritschl's wonted expression, characterising this Roman Catholic kind of Christianity, is very apt; he says that it strives after an imaginary private relationship with God.[1] Luther was well acquainted with the charms of this Catholic piety, yet he did not "creep into a corner," but remained, not merely outwardly, but with his whole heart in the calling in which God had placed him. For he knew that God was accessible for him only in that realm of moral necessity where alone all men alike must find an abode that is truly eternal. Thus did Luther remove the veil that hid the truth of Jesus' preaching concerning the kingdom of God, and thus did he prepare the way for a renovation of Christendom in its inmost life.

True devotion to God should consist in devotion to men.

§7. Therefore let us draw back from the sensuous charm of that "private relationship with God." When we turn to God we are not to feel that we are cut off from all other men, but that we are entering on fellowship with them. We believe indeed that we are to look for God's care for our individual lives, but we are to expect that He will care only for that in our lives which belongs to the moral brotherhood, and not for that which refuses to enter

(1) Of course, in saying this Ritschl laid himself open to the misunderstanding that he did not believe in God's care for the individual, and of this his opponents made abundant use.

such fellowship, and so is cut off from the eternal. Neither in what is opposed to duty, nor in what is indifferent to it can we meet with God, or do we desire to do so. And we take this attitude although we, too, hold with Luther that God means "to care for each soul separately, as though there were only the one soul, and no other on earth besides.[1]

All this gives us only the necessary *form* for communion.

§8. In the foregoing we have only described the *form* of personal life in which alone a communion with God can take place. As long as we are occupied with a spiritual task which is not connected, so far as we are concerned, with the morally necessary, so long do we also keep our souls far from God. For the good, or the morally necessary, is nothing else than the expression of the eternal claiming our devotion, and calling us to share itself. Thus, of a certainty, it is only in submission to moral obligations that we can turn towards God, that God who seeks to help us to a life in the eternal. But this moral attitude on the part of men, this recognition that all that is within us ought to yield to what is good, is only the presupposition necessary for the religious act in which we commune with God, and is not that act itself. The man who thinks of the good and wills it, enters by so doing into that inner state wherein he can see the God who is working upon him; and yet it is not in the moral activity itself that we rise to God, for we may agree in spirit with what is good or morally necessary without at the same time having God in mind.

(1) Erlangen Edition, xxxvi., 42. Luther takes this expression from Augustine (Cf. p. 49); but from this presentation of the love of God the two teachers derive widely differing views of religious practice. Augustine derives from it that mystical communion with God which can only be enjoyed in separation from the world, and it is only later on that a soul is to be allowed to turn to the world in love, bearing the divine secret in its heart. Luther, on the contrary, combines with this idea a doctrine of communion with God which bids the Christian conceive of and realise all his relations to the world as messages of God to his soul.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

What is devotion itself?

§1. We are accustomed in common to call the lifting of our heart to God our "Andacht" or devotion, in the sense of "attention" or "devoted thinking." This expresses rightly our sense that there should be an inward bringing of God before us, and a conscious direction of the thoughts towards Him. But the question arises as to how we bring this to pass. We turn truly towards God only when we take and use that beneficent act of His in which we experience His working upon us. "Thanksgiving and the blessing of God make our requests bold and strong; prayer is cold, listless, and difficult unless the heart be already inflamed by the coals of blessing."[1] But the blessing or beneficent act which kindles that fire within us is the fact that God comes near us in Christ. No other human act has any place in our communion with God save our understanding and using this blessing from God. If such religious significance be ascribed to any other human act whatever, then the most fervent devotion will become a species of denial of God; for so soon as we think that we can reach and influence God by what we ourselves originate, then we use indeed the name of God, but we mean a Being who belongs to the world, and can therefore be used as any other element therein. There is an inner process wherein we become inly acquainted with this blessing from our God that lifts us into communion with Himself, there is an inner process which spreads the power of that blessing over every relationship of our life, and that inner process is *faith*. "It is not needful for thee to do this or that. Only give our Lord God the glory, take what He gives thee, and believe what He tells thee."[2] "Thou mayest do no good thing for God, but only seek to obtain, to pray for, and to

(1) Erlangen Edition, vii., 130.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xviii., 20.

receive good from Him through faith."[1] "By no other work can we reach God or lose Him, save by faith or by unbelief, by trust or by doubt. Of other works no one reaches up to God."[2] All attempts on our part to establish in us a meritorious piety prove worthless when we come to know the real God who is above the world. "Faith must do all that is to find place between us and God."[3] All other human doing will be taken up with the fulfilment of that law of duty which points a man to his fellow-men and says: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Faith alone applies to God, love to our neighbours. Hardly any other principle is so often emphasised in Luther's writings as this terse description of the Christian life.[4]

As soon as we have once grasped the idea of the God who is above the world, whom we cannot force into our service, but by whose grace we live, it cannot be hard for us to see that to commune with Him can be nothing else than to receive and appreciate what He gives us when He comes inwardly near us. Fear of the Holy one, then, indeed forbids us that other kind of piety that would strive to press upward to God by human endeavour, but much more are we kept from such a course by our joy at this gift of God, that is something incomparably different from all that any human struggles could work out.

True faith is no mere presupposition; such as assent to doctrines.

§2. The proposition that faith is the Christian's communion with God nevertheless needs explanation. For faith, wherein arises our knowledge of divine things, might seem to be rather something to be presupposed, in order that after it we may then commune with God; and then, when the Christian follows the knowledge he has gained and turns actively towards God, his action might seem to belong to another kind of activity, and perhaps we

(1) Erlangen Edition, x., 25; xlix., 343: "Here we are always wanting to turn the tables and do good of ourselves to that poor man, our Lord God, from whom we are rather to receive it."

(2) Erlangen Edition, xvi., 142. (3) Erlangen Edition, x., 26; xv., 163, 349.

(4) Cf. Erlangen Edition, xv., 547f.; xlvii., 254; li., 403; ix., 273; xi., 55, 350; xiii., 90; xvi., 332. In xv., 48, Luther reminds his hearers that they have often heard him say the same before; and in xi., 349, he insists: "See thou to it that the works thou doest shall not be for God, but for thy neighbour."

ought to distinguish it from "faith" by calling it "prayer." Luther's understanding of faith gives us all we need to help us to a decision on this question.

We must first do away with the claim that faith, like every other means whereby men seek to come to God, is a human work. Had we to admit the unqualified truth of this claim with regard to the faith of which we speak, then our faith itself would be an effort to lay hold on God by human means. But it is just this that we ought expressly to exclude from the communion of the Christian with God. The Reformers were manifestly aware that their opponents regarded faith as one among many human efforts all equally necessary to union with God. "They think that faith is a thing which they may have or may not have at will, like any other natural human work; so when they arrive at a conclusion and say, "Verily, the doctrine is right, and therefore I believe it," then they think that this is faith. Now when they see and feel that no change has thereby taken place in themselves and others, and that works do not follow, and they remain as before in the old nature—then they think that the faith is not enough, but that there must be something more and greater."[1] Thus Luther knew a kind of faith which a man himself begets and brings to pass in himself by assent to doctrines of some sort. Luther calls such a faith worthless, because it gives us nothing.[2]

Nor is faith a mere presupposition such as accepting the Biblical stories for true.

§3. The same holds good of acceptance of narratives of sacred scripture as true. This also is to Luther a "natural work without grace;"[3] even Turks and heathens may accomplish it.[4] He loves to show how easy it is to have such a faith. He says indeed, concerning the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament, "Men are easily persuaded to believe this article."[5]

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiii., 301.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xi., 201: xv., 539. In xlviii., 5, we read as follows: "If thou holdest faith to be simply a thought concerning God, then that thought is as little able to give me eternal life as ever a monkish cowl could give it."

(3) Erlangen Edition, x., 142. (4) Erlangen Edition, xvi., 483: vii., 253.

(5) Erlangen Edition, xi., 198.

We might be tempted to think that although this opinion of Luther's may have been justified in his own day, it will not apply to our present situation, since it is now far more difficult than it was then to accept such things. But even if we make such a distinction between our own age and that of Luther, yet his judgment still holds good. For without doubt it is still possible, with the aid of human art and science, to set about attaining and to fight out a belief in the possibility and reality of such things as the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the elements of the Lord's Supper. Compared with such sort of convictions, which can always be reached, the faith of Luther is incomparably harder; not then alone was it hard. For it is simply unattainable by any human power. No insight, however deep, can found it; no will, however strong, can build it." The true faith of which we speak cannot be made by our thoughts, but is purely a work of God in us, without any aid of ours."[1] Indeed, Luther is speaking of a faith which makes man a new being; which certainly therefore cannot be experienced as the work of the man himself who has not been made anew.[2]

Is faith to be dissected into human elements and divine elements?

§4. If it be asked what kind of faith it is which a man must regard as produced in him by God, we get Luther's answer in passage after passage, but his answer, strangely enough, has just the tendency to lead men back to the standpoint from which he wishes to set them free. He tells us very often[3] that true faith is not the mere acceptance of the truth of any doctrines or historical narratives, but that it comes along with the firm conviction that all these are intended for our salvation and avail for the same. It is clear that, viewed in this way, another effort seems to be expected in addition to the effort to hold these things as true, and that this new effort is to produce the conviction just named. It is in this perverted form that Luther's doctrine has been handed down in Lutheran orthodoxy. The orthodox theology holds firmly that faith con-

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiii., 302; l., 241: "But simple dependence on Christ through faith is not man's work but God's"; lxiii., 126, "For as no one can give himself faith, so no one can remove his own unbelief."

(2) viii., 226, 284,; x., 173-4. 216.

(3) Compare. *e.g.*, x., 142.

sists in notitia, assensus and fiducia,[1] and so treats "assent," or "the acceptance of certain things as true," as a work that may be accomplished before "fiducia" is reached, and that its origin at that point is to be sought either in simple volition, or in considerations of some kind which appeal to the reason.[2]

But if we imagine that faith can thus grasp its object, then the "confidence" which makes faith complete must also take the character of a work to be accomplished by man; for the effort of the "assensus" is continued all through the peculiar "confidence." And even if it be added that the whole process is really based on God's working upon men, this assertion has nevertheless no value for the inner life of faith, for according to the requirements of the doctrine, this life is to reach its perfection in human efforts. And so faith is experienced and counted none the less a product of human effort; just as Roman Catholics regard their good works, in spite of the doctrine of "Gratia operans."

Luther's real view was certainly different, as we see from his sharp distinction between the faith which God awakens and that produced by men. He is not content to assert that faith has its origin in the working of God upon men, but he describes the inner processes which also the believer is to regard as a work of God within him. In the following he describes, more fully than his custom was, the difference between the faith which makes men blessed and that which is worthless. He says, "For when faith is of the kind that God awakens and creates in the heart, then a man trusts in Christ; yea, he is then so firmly founded upon Christ that he bids defiance to sin, death, hell, the devil, and all God's adversaries; and he

(1) Knowledge, assent, and confidence.

(2) Hence Quenstedt declares that the first element of faith is to be found even in heretics, the second only in the orthodox, and the third only in those who are born again. He says also that each succeeding step in the process always implies the preceding one, but that the reverse does not hold good. Clearly, then, it is conceived as necessary to faith to have an "assensus" which is not inseparable from "fiducia," and therefore not produced by God's revelation or Himself. Baier's definition sounds better: "Assensus cum fiducia, seu fiducia cum assensu conjuncta; ex quibus actibus velut unitis constat, et nunc illius, nunc hujus nomine appellatur, altero semper connotato" (assent is bound up with confidence, or confidence with assent; of these acts, united as it were, (faith) consists; now called by the one name and now by the other, both being always connoted). Compare H. Schmidt, "The Dogmatic Theology of the Protestant Lutheran Church," 6th Edition, 1876, p. 303f. But here also the main point is lacking, namely, that the "assensus" in faith can only be regarded as an element in the "fiducia" which God awakens by the fact in which He reveals Himself, unless it is to become simply a fruitless human endeavour that hinders faith.

fears no misfortune, however hard and cruel it may prove. And that is the nature of true faith, which is utterly unlike the faith of sophists, Jews, and Turks; for their faith simply lights upon a thing with human thoughts, *accepts it*, and believes that it is thus or so. But God has no dealings with such delusion; it is the work of man, and such delusion comes from nature, from the free will of man, so that, possessing it, they can say and repeat after others: I believe that there is a God, that Christ was born, died, and rose again *for me*. But what such a faith is, and how powerful it is, of this they know nothing."[1] It is noteworthy that Luther includes even those words, "for me," in the possible contents of a false faith. Above all, however, we must observe how far he is from prizing that assent to doctrines and narratives to which men force themselves, as if it were the beginning or first step towards the true faith, for, says he, "God has no dealings with such delusion." He by no means calls us to such a work as to a necessary preliminary to further progress, but he warns against such a course with earnest cry, saying, "Wherefore beware of that faith which is made and imagined, for the true faith is not a work of man, and therefore faith which is made and imagined will not avail in death, but will be overcome and utterly upset by sin, by the devil, and by the pains of hell. But the true faith is the heart's utter trust in Christ, and God alone awakens this in us. He who has it is blessed; he who has it not is condemned."[2]

Luther was no doubt at times overpowered by the weight of the tradition which ascribed to "faith on authority," or, in other words, to submission to doctrines not understood, the power to open the kingdom of heaven to men. But when he speaks out of his own faith, that faith in which he knows that he has been lifted by God to God, then he testifies with his whole soul that we do not come to the true faith through works and doctrines,[3] and that a "faith on authority," which our own resolve creates, cannot help us one whit, since the revelation of God which creates true faith works only upon the man who understands it.[4]

(1) Erlangen Edition, xv., 540; cf., xvi., 442, and the Latin Works, xxiii., 522.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xv., 542. (3) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 46. (4) Erlangen Edition, xi., 176.

Luther insisted on an objective ground of faith.

§5. Luther would not allow that a "work" of reasoned and determined assent to doctrines and narratives is real faith. Did he mean by this that the Christian faith has nothing to do with any objective fact that can be considered as distinct from the man himself, and that it is, let us say, simply an unrelated working of the divine element in the man's own soul? Most certainly he neither meant that nor anything of the kind. "But faith cannot be fed by aught save by the Word of God alone." "For where there is no promise of God there is no faith."[1]

It was Luther's view of the matter that was laid down in the Apology (II., §50-52), where the "promissio dei" and the "fides" of man are said to be "correlata" and intimately related one to another.[2] Luther's great and only aim was to keep faith free from the "delusion of works"; but all the more closely on that account did he connect faith with the fact through which the creative power of the Almighty, the Maker of all things out of nothing, lays hold on the man who is lost in the world, in order to make him His own child and ruler over the world. That fact, for Luther as for us, was the historical figure of Jesus, which makes clear to us our forlorn condition, and likewise works upon us as the "promissio dei," the emancipating revelation of God.

The true nature of faith.

§6. But now if faith is so bound up with an objective fact, does it not seem impossible to deny that if we are to have faith at all, we must enter into some relation to this same fact which shall be literally an "assent," the opposite of a rejection? In that case we should be once more on the standpoint of that orthodox doctrine which plainly inserts the "assensus" as the necessary acknowledgment of the reported facts, between the "notitia," or acquaintance with the historical report, and the "fiducia," or religious realisation of the fact reported.

Undoubtedly, among us all at the present time, this course of thought is so universally followed that the most widely

(1) Erlangen Edition, xxvii., 154f.

(2) Cf. Erlangen Edition, xii., 178, "Therefore on our side is nothing save faith alone, and on His side only the Word and Sign."

different theological schools find themselves at one on this point.[1] If we compare, however, the discussion concerning faith in the Apology (as already quoted), we shall certainly find something essentially different from this, which must not be overlooked. The Apology only speaks of a becoming acquainted with the fact by which faith is kindled, and of that appreciation of its contents wherein faith consists; *i.e.*, it speaks only of "notitia" and "fiducia." No mention is made of a special assent to the fact as such, apart from its significance for the faith which it awakens. Clearly, the Reformers looked upon the ground of their faith as an unquestionable fact, which had *by its very contents* the power to awaken the new life of faith in any man who became aware of it. It is quite true that the idea of the "assensus" as an act which must be accomplished before the experience of faith was not brought into Protestant theology without Luther's sanction; for Luther preserved many of the ideas of the elder church without showing how such ideas arise within the life of faith as that is created of God. And ideas which are made the object of faith without such understanding of them, certainly do, of course, require the so-called act of "assensus" for their acceptance. Nevertheless Luther did not, however, hark back to the scholastic doctrine that "assensus" is the fundamental act to which the "fiducia" or "spes" must be attached. A stronger impulse in this direction was given by Melancthon, whose followers enlarged their Protestant theology by open dependence on the schoolmen. J. Gerhard had not the faintest idea of the meaning of the step he was taking, when he set out by laying down the definition of Thomas Aquinas[3]:—"ad fidem duo requiruntur: 1. ut homine credibilia proponantur; 2. assensus credentis ad ea, quae proponuntur."[4] Certainly, when he did so, he was working with a conception of the object

(1) Cf. E. König, in "The Act of Christian faith," 1891. In this book the proposition is defended, that the Reformers had no understanding of faith different from that of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet Frank (Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, 1891, p. 555) praises "the true Protestant tone and aim" of this treatise. I must reserve discussion of König's book until a further opportunity.

(2) Loci; Preuss's Edition, iii., 254.

(3) Cf. Erlangen Edition, xlviii., 5:—"We say that this is faith; when *I see* what faith has to lay hold on and grasp. See also xii., 249.

(4) "For faith two things are necessary: 1. That that things be propounded which a man can believe; 2. The assent of the believer to what is propounded."

of faith which necessarily led on to the scholastic conception of faith. He says, namely, that the object of faith is *the coelestis doctrina*, the heavenly doctrine, which we must not only know, but assent to, in order to have the *fides*. In this he is undoubtedly right from his point of view as to what is the object of faith; for if the "fiducia" of faith is to apply to doctrine, then that "fiducia" can only arise when the doctrine has received assent. The so-called Lutheran finds the notion of an "assensus" preceding 'fiducia" to be necessary, because he has no longer in view the same object of faith as Luther had. The fancy, of which people to-day can scarcely get rid, that there must be an "assensus" before "fiducia" in order that faith may exist, arises from the same deeply rooted presupposition that the object of faith is a *teaching* concerning divine things. How powerfully this confusion of ideas concerning faith operated in Melancthon's constitution of the Lutheran church has been shown by Ritschl.[1] Even Luther, who knew faith to be the work and gift of God, and who found his freedom in that knowledge, did not always assert it, but could continue to present the idea that faith is an acceptance of prescribed doctrines.[2] In the "Formula Concordiae" we find a contradiction of the real idea peculiar to Luther already laid down as a self-evident truth. It is there stated (Solida declaratio, v. 20),[3] that the gospel is a doctrine, which teaches what men are to believe that (*i.e.*, in order that) they may obtain the forgiveness of sins. Thus faith is here looked upon, not as a confidence awakened in human hearts by God's showing Himself, but as assent given to doctrines to which a man must bring himself, and for which he is to be rewarded by forgiveness. And however strongly it may also be insisted that faith is a work of the Holy Spirit, yet inevitably such a faith becomes a work the believer regards as an achievement of his own.

We must break away altogether from this idea. And to do so is no innovation of ours. We simply set aside an idea which

(1) Compare Briegers Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte I, 89ff.; also Gottschick Die Kirchichkeit der sogen. Kirchlichen Theologie,' ("The churchliness of the so-called churchly theology)."

(2) Compare, *e.g.*, Erlangen Edition, viii., 190ff; xi., 268, xix., 9. "Because of such sayings; which cannot be attributed to man or angel, I must believe that He was very God: xxix., 340, li., 122.

(3) The Completer Edition of the "Formula."

'the Reformers' doctrine concerning faith has always contradicted. Christian faith looks, in the first instance, not to any doctrine, but to a fact which stands firm and sure in the life of the man who is summoned to believe. Accordingly "notitia" is certainly a necessary condition for faith. The fact to which faith looks and on which it may be founded, must somehow or other have come within our circle of vision. But it would be no confession of that fact's saving power, but rather a confession of its impotence, if we should say that, given the perceived fact, a human effort is then needed which shall master the fact and make it the basis of faith. They who do not know the divine power of this fact, that is, they who do not believe in it, will certainly judge in such wise as to the origin of faith; but the believer is necessarily certain that he himself has been overpowered by it. It is only when he is so certain that he actually sees the reality of that power of God which is the object of faith. And so his judgment as to the origin of his faith is none other than the faith itself; that judgment is simply the expression of the faith which cannot declare the reality of its object in any other way. When a fact exercises such power over our soul that it becomes to us the reality of the God who is saving us, then we say that fact wins our confidence. All Christian faith is thus really a confidence in an event which has taken place in the Christian's own life. No discussions concerning the credibility of a report or inquiries into the truth of a doctrine can supply faith with its real object, at least not that faith which is to be itself an experience of divine help, and not simply the work of man.

Now the event whose occurrence in our life is fraught with such importance, is the fact that the portrait of Christ is brought before us by the New Testament and expounded to us by life in Christian fellowship. It would be absurd to speak of some effort supposed to be necessary to establish that fact. But since this event is different from everything else in our experience by its power to encourage us to trust that there is a God caring for us, all uncertainty as to whether the figure of Jesus, which works thus upon us, belongs to legend or to history, is in the nature of the case impossible. The proof of the historical reality of Jesus

for a believer rests always on the significance which the story of Jesus has gained for his life. It is only when the Christian has taken this story to heart as an unquestionable fact in his own life that all that testifies to the historical reality of Jesus stands out before him and is clearly and easily grasped. Thus the "assensus" to what is historically reported, so far as such *assensus* has any place in faith at all, does not precede the "fiducia" as a work of human effort, but is bound up with it as a result brought about by the fact on which faith is based. An assent produced in any other way to the statement that the Person of Jesus belongs to human history, could not be so organically bound up with religious faith as to form a unity; for a judgment reached by a process of historical enquiry could not lay claim to anything more than probability. But to Christian faith it is a *certainty* that Jesus lived as the Man who opened up the possibility of an eternal life for men by His gospel of the Kingdom of God, and who was at the same time conscious that the existence of His Person in life and death would make that kingdom real for all who did not pass Him by. By historical investigation we cannot gain the certainty that these are not the features of an ideal worked around a mythical personage, but the real claims of a man full of peace and power.

Faith impels to historical study; not historical study to faith.

§7. Rather is it true that a regard for history and a consideration of it which is pervaded with this certainty and which works in the atmosphere of it, springs up only in those who have felt, under the influence of the story of this Man, what a significance that story has for them and for all men. Again, it is impossible to combine with faith such an assent to the historical reality of Jesus as would come of a simple resolve on man's part to believe it. For such an achievement of a strong and daring will would be the exact opposite of that submission to God which is characteristic of true faith. If we are to avoid both these by-paths, we must grasp and hold fast these two things following: first, faith is trust in an event which moves us so that we interpret it to mean that God is seeking to tell us of His care for

us by this event; and secondly, for us this event is first and foremost the fact that we are brought under the influence of the Christian brotherhood, its life and preaching. We receive from every side about us evidences of Christian faith and Christian love, and so we are pointed to Christ and prepared to understand His Person. Thus, in spite of all the darkness which sin causes amid our human intercourse, we gain a vision of spiritual riches which reveals to the maturest mind and to the heart of a child alike what is the perfect life of the spirit.

Of course these experiences alone do not make any man a Christian, but the condition of need into which they bring us places us in a position where we can apprehend the Person of Jesus to be, not a problem which perplexes us, but the fact in our own life that sets us free. Historical influences gathered around that personage reach even to us through the continuous life and activity of the Christian brotherhood; and these influences move us and awaken in us a longing for the perfect life. When a man is burdened by this longing for what seems impossible, then arises before him the picture of Jesus, which appears to him no longer as an ideal picture without any background of reality, but as the historical fact, which marvellously and incomprehensibly justifies his longing. The ideals of untrammelled love for what is good, and of inward peace over against the world, which beam down as the sunshine upon the life of the Christian brotherhood, do not actually cause our faith in God, but they do lift us into an inward condition where the figure of Jesus, as history records it, touches us with such power that we are obliged to place confidence in it as a revelation of God. In its commencement and in all its development alike, Christian faith is nothing else than trust in persons and in the powers of personal life. We begin to understand God's gift and God's help in our religious intercourse with Christians, and through our reverence for them; then, when we have received such a training, the picture of that wonderful personal life which the gospels set before us, becomes an earnest plea that we shall put our trust in it as testimony concerning a Man whose existence in our world makes us certain of God. When our eyes are once open to perceive what it means to us

that Jesus has lived and what we should be without Him, then we see also the living naturalness of the historically constructed portrait of Jesus, and the feebleness of any doubt as to its historical truth. Such doubt is strong for him only whose soul has not been so placed that this historical phenomenon could awaken his confidence. And there is no method, either of art or science, that can make that confidence unnecessary, or that could in any other way make it possible to acknowledge that Christ is the revelation of God. Possibly some sort of faith might be *manufactured* by such means, but we could not become conscious of a faith *arising* within us as the work of God unless the root of that faith be this confidence with which we are overwhelmed by the appearance of Jesus. In such trust our own free will breathes and acts, and yet we experience in it all the work of One who is stronger than we.[1] Hence, when Luther is seeking an expression for faith as no work of man, but as that wherein we know that we are being lifted up by God to God, he can find none better than these words of childlike simplicity:—"a heartfelt trust in Christ."[2]

Faith gives birth to fearless criticism.

§8. When we ask, why then have Luther's followers fallen away from this emancipating knowledge of life, and burdened themselves again with a piece of human workmanship under the name of faith? the answer is easy when we remember, in the first place, that even Luther himself did not altogether give up the old traditional conception of faith as a human act (see above, p. 175).

The answer is easy, again, when we remember, in the second place, the fearless critical power which must come along with this new understanding of what true faith is. When faith insists on being nothing else save confidence in Christ, then any element in the story of Jesus necessarily becomes a matter of indifference, if, from its very nature, it cannot satisfy the desire for a salvation which means forgiveness of sins and life in spiritual freedom as

(1) Compare Erlangen Edition, xxxv., 239. "We honour God only by our faith, and God rules in us by faith."

(2) Compare, for instance, Erlangen Edition, xlvii., 12.

over against the world. In face of the seriousness of such a desire for salvation, then, the miracles reported in the New Testament necessarily become of minor importance, for in no case can we say of them that they must be there in order that we may get help to this sort of salvation to-day. All such things retire into obscurity, but so much the clearer grows the one ground of salvation, the Person of Jesus Himself, who lives altogether for the kingdom of God, and dies in the certainty that He has brought that kingdom to sinners. It is not a doubting intellect that makes this distinction; it is faith. He who has found Jesus Himself to be the ground of his salvation has no need of those miracles. It is well known that Luther did not hesitate to say this. Here are his words, "Even if there were no miracles of Christ, and we knew nothing of them, we should still have enough in the Word, without which we could not have life."[1] Again, "Those visible works are simply signs for the ignorant, unbelieving crowd, and for their sakes that are yet to be attracted; but as for us who know already all we do know, what do we want with them?" And again, "Wherefore it is no wonder that they have now ceased, since the gospel has sounded abroad everywhere, and has been preached to those who had not known of God before, whom He had to attract with outward miracles, just as we throw apples and pears to children."[2] And yet again, "And what does it signify if He made a score or two to see and hear, or even if He raised them from the dead? For such signs happened only to the end that the Christian Church might be founded, instituted and received, along with that baptism and preaching with which it was to be established."[3] No one could declare more plainly that the miracles were intended for the age in which they happened, and were meant for *unbelievers* then, in order to direct them to Christ; but that they no longer possess the same significance for believers and for us, who do not see them, but only hear about them. It cannot be denied that the story of Christ's miracles

(1) Erlangen Edition, li., 327.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 236f.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xix., 169.

does not give us now the comfort that His words afford;[1] or to quote Luther again, "For I am not so sure of the grace that was in the miracles and that was shown *to others*, as when I have clear plain words for myself; and it comforts me more to hear such friendly admonitions and persuasions, than to hear preaching concerning miracles."[2] In Luther's faith, the Person of Christ pressed even the miracles aside, and a clear example of this may be seen in his discussion of the story of Christ's birth, where he writes, "Hence we see that the dear apostles, Paul, John and Peter, together with Christ Himself, do not say even one single word concerning the mother, the Virgin, for the greatest power does not lie in the fact that she was a Virgin; but *everything depends on this*, and for this end everything else took place, that we should know that the Child came for our sakes, that for us He walked and stood, that He is our Lord and God, who will receive and protect us."[3] Moreover, Luther's faith did not find its interest in the fact that the Child was born, but in the Person of Christ in his life-work, or in that which Christ did as man: "The scripture does not make much of the birth and childhood of Christ. Therefore the Evangelists write little concerning His childhood, but hasten to His thirtieth year, to describe His office whereto He came;" "and there (*i.e.*, at Christ's baptism) begins the New Testament, and not with the childhood of Christ;" "and, to sum up all, with His baptism begins His office—*it is then that he becomes our Christ, our Saviour*, which He came to be."[4] Luther will not have these miracles despised, and he makes the customary allegorical use of them;[5] but it is clear to him that they cannot be the basis and object of that faith wherein he knows himself redeemed. It is simply inevitable that when we have found redemption in confidence in Christ Himself, this part of the story should be put on one side; for whether Jesus healed few or many sick persons, whether He raised few or many from the dead, or whether He did none of these things,—all this can neither strengthen nor weaken our

(1) Erlangen Edition, xv., 289.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xv., 290.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xv., 155
(4) Erlangen Edition, xv., 238f.; xxxv. 208.
(5) Erlangen Edition, xv 290

trust in that Man who makes sinners certain of God's grace, and who takes away from a soul all fear of judgment.

Such faith distinguishes the Person of Jesus clearly from the miracles.

§9. Now here some one will properly remark that many of the most vivid features of the historical portrait of Jesus are intimately related to narratives of His miracles; and with such remark will naturally be inclined to link together as the object of faith all that is linked together in the traditional record, and so to regard the miracles as the objects of faith equally with His Person, since they are recorded of Him. It needs a very serious recollection of what is the real basis of faith to enable one at such a point to assert the truth as opposed to the claims of a natural reverence. If this be considered, it will help to explain how that estimate of faith as awakened of God which Luther had formed, has vanished again from Protestant theology, though not indeed from the Protestant Church. Of course a conviction of the historical truth of these stories of miracles may be appended to a real faith without doing any detriment to the purity and strength of the latter. Although the inner process of actual faith is in no way dependent upon that conviction, yet most of those for whom the Person of Jesus has become the basis of a new life, would count it a disturbance of their faith if one were to assail that confidence in the stories which has grown in them with their growth in healthy reverence. Nevertheless this attitude, which is quite natural to many, and worthy of every Christian's regard, is not without great danger to clearness of faith and purity of conscience. For if the inner life of the Christian never reaches such seriousness and depth that faith on the one hand, and the acceptance of those narratives as true on the other, are seen to be quite distinct things, then even the faith "which God awakens in the heart" is contaminated and made impure by impotent human endeavours. As soon as acceptance of those narratives as true is honoured as the most important element, or beginning, of faith, then at once there will also appear the injurious consequences of founding faith thus on human endeavour. A faith in which there lurks an

element so utterly different from confidence in God is not felt to be a work of God, however strongly it be asserted that He brings it about.

The objection has been raised that in order to get a true portrait of Jesus, we simply must believe previously in the miracles, since the disposition of Jesus is manifested precisely by the way in which He performed the miracles.[1] If this were true, then Christ would not be our Redeemer, but we should have to redeem ourselves by our own resolve. No miracle of which others tell us has of itself the power to influence us so that it shall appear unquestionably real in our eyes. The matter of great moment to us is that something shall come before us which has not first to be made a fact by our desiring to believe it, but which simply is a fact. Such a thing alone can be to us the ground of a faith wherein we shall be really redeemed, that is to say, lifted away above all that we were before or could make of ourselves; and the Person of Jesus can do this for us, because a clear vision of Him, and a vision which commands our conscience, can rise up before us from the records even though we hold the miracles to be legendary. Indeed, it is possible to think of a man getting a most vivid impression of Jesus' power, just when he thinks he sees that His historical appearance has been swathed in a thick mist of legends, and that, nevertheless, the glory of His inner life breaks through all these veils. A man who thinks he sees this has, at any rate, a firmer ground for his faith than another who determines to believe in the resurrection of Jesus in order that he may have his feet planted on a fact that overcomes the world. The objection named above misconceives the true ground and proper nature of faith, for it supposes that we neither can nor may come near to Jesus Himself before we are in a position to hold as true such a matter as the resurrection of Jesus. The traditional record may appear doubtful; but the essential contents of that record, namely the inner life of Jesus, have the power to convince the conscience that that life is an undeniable fact. That means everything.

(1) A. Oppenrieder in the Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, 1891, p. 312ff.

Of the tendency to make religion as easy as possible: (1.) as seen in systems of theology

§10. A third reason why the freedom of Luther's faith has been lost lies in the fact that religion is always disfigured when those who cling to it busy themselves with the thought of its outward advantages. For then selfishness is sorely tempted to get in religion on the easiest terms possible. The recipe for the process is always the same. You take part in it outwardly, but put it far from your heart. The kind of thought and conduct which springs out of such a procedure supplies all the forms of enjoyment of worldly mastery and all the devices for making religion into worldliness. The richer development of these forms is to be found in Roman Catholicism. Protestantism has really only one workshop for the skilful production of them, namely, systematic theology. Even among Protestants this study has, as a rule, been employed, not to serve religion, but to secularise it. It weaves the broad cloak under which all may creep who either do not know the terrors of religion, or who want to avoid them, but would like to live in a religion of the human sort. That semblance of scientific character which systematic theology knows well how to assume is disappearing now that even in theology a scientific work is beginning which follows seriously those laws of investigation which have been reasoned out quite independently of this particular subject. Even attempts to preserve that semblance of scientific character by using the most dignified terminology possible will make but little difference. But all the while the disposition prevalent in this worldly procedure has been blossoming into a giant flower within the very church itself. The desire has been to participate in religion by merely getting one's religious ideas from the sacred Scriptures, or from the traditional story of Christianity in general; and so participation in religion is made easy in Protestantism.

But in order really to take part in religion we must become certain of the Everlasting God, and that He is communing with us. This comes to no one *sine magna concussione animae*. In order to this we must take to heart the particular situation in which we stand, and live that out in seriousness and truthfulness. If this be true, then, the business of theology is to show in the first

place what we have to do in Christianity, to come to some understanding of our present existence, and then to shew how that understanding becomes possible for us if we take into account the appearance of Jesus as the most important element of our existence. That is the task of a systematic theology which will really serve religion. In that way the truth is established that we become Christians, not by an acceptance of thoughts which are strange to us, but by the revelation of God to ourselves; and that revelation alone, being something that we experience for ourselves, can change our whole inner life. Our hearts shrink when we see that the matter affects us so closely, and this shrinking is rather encouraged by the systems of theology, for the claim they raise that the thoughts of other men who have been lifted into communion with God may be worked together into a system of divine truth, opens a loophole by which we may escape from real religion while we still preserve its appearance.

Of course it is always insisted that a man must be already renewed by the Spirit of God in order to be able to grasp such ideas of other saints. But then the systematic theologian proceeds to deny this admission by the course he usually follows. It is admitted that these thoughts stand in the closest union conceivable with the personality in which they rise; they are supposed to be movements of a new personal life which receives from divine revelation the power to think such thoughts. But then the very attempt to make a system out of them is wrong. From the nature of the way in which they are revealed to the new and growing personality of the Christian, they are imperfect; hence they must be disfigured by any theological attempts to form them into a system.

The name, systematic theology, is valuable in spite of all this, for there certainly ought to be a system clearly mapped out which should show the connection between revelation and faith, and the rise of those Christian ideas. But if we try to make a system, whose relationships of part to part we thoroughly grasp, out of the thoughts which the man renewed by the revelation of God finds himself free to reach, then we drag

those thoughts down into the very region from which they are to raise us. This one consideration alone shows how the tendency to make Christianity easier prevails in systematic theology.

(ii.) Of the tendency to make religion as easy as possible: seen in the so-called but false loyalty to the sacred Scriptures.

§11. But that tendency goes still farther in another practice, one which is held to be worthy of the highest esteem, namely, the way in which loyalty to Scripture is misconceived and practised by Protestant dogmatics. Some individual and pleasing changes have taken place in this respect, and in these the advances made in exegesis have been taken in account. But the chief point remains unaltered, namely, that loyalty to Scripture is taken to mean that the thoughts recorded in the sacred Scripture as possessed by its writers are to be fitted into the system of dogmatics with the utmost possible completeness. At this point Ritschl and his opponents would fully agree. Nevertheless it cannot be ignored that such an undertaking will always lead to the legitimation of a faith which is nothing more than a ready acceptance of unaccustomed thoughts. For where lives the Christian who could with truth presume to say that he treasures the thoughts of a Paul as his very own? Surely all of us read the apostle with the feeling that he has a different measure and a different energy of faith from ours. If that be so, then the dogmatics which undertakes to fit together and give us as its own the apostle's thoughts with the utmost completeness, serves corruption. If we adopt such a view of the task of theology, we are proposing for the sake of so-called loyalty to Scripture, even to call thoughts our own which still remain strange to us; and in that case we countenance the belief that Christian character is to be established precisely by accustoming oneself to use the thoughts of other Christians. Wherever this belief is established, longing for true life dies out.

He who thinks to gain help in religion by a mere access of strange thoughts, will soon forget that he needs above all things to have thoughts of his own. It has so fine a sound to say decidedly that the task of theology is to include, as far as possible, all Scriptural thoughts. But the inevitable consequence

of so doing is that we learn to be content with a mere outward relation to such thoughts. True loyalty to Scripture is quite another thing. We are really on the path which the apostles trod when we in our position become certain of God and of His grace in the same way in which they in their position gained that certainty, namely, through the Person of Jesus. Thus we have the same faith that they had. The thoughts amid which their faith moves become, in such a case, no longer a prescription which we are to try to follow outwardly, but a means whereby we may gain inward enlightenment. They are, by rights, to be a help to us in that task which is really incumbent upon us, namely, that we are to live with a faith of our own; they are not to be a law which prevents us from seeing the one thing needful.

Still, it will always be the case that many who would like to share in Christianity, will seek to attain Christianity by a faith which follows this direction: "Put thyself in accord with the thoughts of Christians, and so shalt thou be a Christian." That is an easy thing for them to do, and gives them that appearance which they prize. It is uncommonly hard to help such persons to real Christianity. You may tell them as often as you can, and the Protestant theology does indeed tell them this faithfully, that a man must become another being in order to become a Christian. They can do nothing with such a counsel. For they have robbed themselves beforehand by the falsehood of their faith of that in which the new birth should manifest itself, namely, the power of living in the thoughts of all who are holy. Theology can, and it should, at least avoid the error of leading such persons on by its own conduct to a faith that seeks to make Christianity easy for itself, but avoids the actual experience of religion. We asked the question how it is that, in spite of Luther's mighty struggle, the ready acceptance of the thoughts of others is regarded even in the Protestant church as the beginning of faith and of Christianity. The chief explanation is to be found in the fact that such a conception of faith makes it possible for men to pass for Christians who will not be at the trouble to seek God Himself in their religion.

Conclusion. Such faith needs no supplementation.

§12. It is only when we reserve the name of faith exclusively for the trust which the picture of Christ awakens in us, and the new purpose and courage which are born of that trust, do we quite certainly fix our idea of faith as something given us of God. For we experience all that confidence and its fruits to be the work of Christ, and we understand it to be a gift of that God who turns to us through Christ. If, then, it be correct to say that the communion of the Christian with God can only be realised in a process in which we know that we are raised by God to God, then faith, when rightly understood, fulfils that condition. It is not true that faith in this sense either can or needs to be supplemented by mystical excitements of any sort whatever, in which the devout soul shall feel himself in the very grasp of God. But we shall, of course, fall into such a fancy if we lose out of sight the need of a faith which God awakens, and put in its place a humanly wrought acceptance of doctrines and narratives. Hence it is easy to understand why such a lively sympathy with mysticism is frequently met with in the Protestant church. The healthy religious instinct there, the longing for life with God, runs in this direction precisely because the faith which is cultivated is usually an impotent human struggle, and therefore is anything but a life with God. Those who are fond of mysticism furnish, on a smaller scale, the same spectacle as the great schoolmen did; they seek to rest from the work of their faith in mystic piety. We get away from this evil only by learning again to value faith in Christ as Luther valued it, that is by finding in Him, not merely a necessary condition for our communion with God, but that very communion itself. Having thus described faith as arising as a confidence in the historical phenomenon of Jesus, we have now to point out the inner nature of such faith, by which we recognise it to be actual communion with God.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE INNER CONTENTS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

Entire submission to God.

§1. Only in entire submission to God can the Christian commune with Him. Every act of the soul wherein we think of offering God anything other than this acknowledgment of His honour, and every sort of self-exaltation to equality with God, must be regarded by the Christian as a departure from his God. We have truly reached God's presence only when, in the very depths of our life, we are conscious of our dependence upon Him. Therefore our communion with God can consist in nothing else than this essence of dependence, for every attempt to develop any other communion with God must turn into an attempt to establish our own independence as over against God, in such a way that we really deny Him. Hence we may start with the proposition, as with an axiom, that the ideal of Christian piety is an inward condition of soul in which everything is blotted out from us that could be independent of God; a condition, therefore, in which our inextinguishable desire for life has found rest through our experience of God's power over us.

This proposition, though not foreign to mysticism, is nevertheless intimately connected with the Christian conception of God's nature: for that idea of the nature of piety can be maintained only when we conceive of a God who is, as Luther says, "nothing but pure love,"[1] or whose nature is pure beneficence.[2] Indeed, the task of entire devotion to God plainly presupposes the certainty that joy in personal life, *i.e.*, love, forms no subordinate element in God's life, but is rather the controlling

(1) cf., *e.g.*, Erlangen Edition, xviii., 311-316.

(2) cf., *e.g.*, Erlangen Edition, vii., 168; xii., 354; xv., 532, 543, 545, 546.

and unifying element in His whole life and activity. It is only when possessing this certainty that a personal spirit could, from its very inmost living spring, submit itself to God; whereas, if we felt compelled to think of some other definite element or some hidden and nameless power as the ruling feature in God, then the task of utter self-surrender to Him would become an idle phrase. With any such conception of God, we might indeed offer the Almighty Being many kinds of sacrifice, but not ourselves. In so far as we imagine that God is by His nature strange to us, so far is it impossible that the central spring of our life should more and more have its being in communion with Him; it must rather act quite independently and apart from that. But when we put such a distinction into practice, we refuse that full submission and self-surrender to God which make up undoubtedly the ideal of Christian devotion. There is only *one* way in which that surrender is possible, and therefore only one way to God, and that is the experience that the overwhelming impression of His love and faithfulness lifts us into a confidence that our life's goal is safe with Him, and that therefore it will always reappear, through and despite all our troubles,[1] as the ultimate purpose of the very events that may have given us pain. When our confidence is established in such a way, then we are dependent upon God from our inmost soul. We are brought to God, not by fear and terror, but by a beneficence which takes us captive out and out, because it increases wonderfully our desire for life, and at the same time gratifies it wonderfully. Hence, to enter into communion with God is possible only when such confidence becomes powerful within us. "Now to come to the Father is not to run afoot towards Rome, nor yet to soar with wings towards heaven; but it is to lean on Him with heartfelt confidence, as on a gracious Father, as the Lord's Prayer says at the outset. The more such confidence thrives in the heart the nearer do we come to the Father."[2]

(1) cf., Luther, Opp. var. Arg., IV., 299:—"Cum Deus coli non possit, nisi tribuatur ei veritas et universae bonitatis gloria, sicut vere tribuenda est." (Since God cannot be worshipped, unless truth be ascribed to Him, and the glory of universal kindness, as is indeed His due..)

(2) Erlangen Edition, vii., 71f.

Our communion with God means also recognition of His actual creative power.

§2. If we are to commune with God we must learn to know Him in His creative power; and this is disclosed in the effect which the revelation of God has upon us. We find by living experience that that revelation awakens a wonderful desire for life in the hearts of men whose life is steadily passing away; and the power of His utterance turns our despair into confidence, and converts the self-contempt of the sinner into a spirited joy in what is good. But to see this is to recognise God's creative omnipotence bringing into being things entirely new, to wit, the inner life of the redeemed man. Of course such new creations from God's hand are not the work of a moment, but they occupy the Christian's whole life; and we comprehend the reality of the creation only when we add to our *experience* of faith the careful *estimate of the nature* of that faith, viewed from the standpoint of faith, the estimate, namely, that is based on Christ. (cf. Book III., c. 7, §1).

Thus a communion with no imaginary picture of God, but with God Himself in reality, takes place only when we allow Him to make us new men with the deepest need of our life satisfied. The action of this new life, a life that is bound up with the consciousness of its own divine origin, is communion with God; and the life of the Christian, as it comes from God, is just his faith, wherein, with new purpose and courage, he remembers his sin and learns to love his cross.[1] The reason why Luther says with unceasing repetition that God wants nothing from us except trust and faith,[2] can only be that he knows that the living exercise of faith is the actual communion of man with God. But faith can have this significance only when, in the first place, it is produced by the impression made by the revelation of God, and not by human resolve, and when, secondly, it is not an acceptance of doctrines as true, but a trust in God Himself which He Himself has awakened.

(1) cf. Apol. for Conf., II., 62 and 63:—"Haec fidēs in illis pavoribus erigens et consolans accipit remissionem peccatorum, iustificat et vivificat, nam illa consolatio est *nova et spiritualis vita*. Adversarii nusquam possunt dicere, quomodo detur spiritus sanctus." (This faith arising amid those fears, and giving comfort, receives forgiveness of sins, justifies and makes alive. For that consolation is a new and spiritual life. The adversaries can never say in what way the Holy Spirit is given.) Ibidem, 68:—"Haec diximus hactenus ut modum regenerationis ostenderemus." (We have said these things so far, in order to set forth the manner of regeneration.)

(2) cf., *e.g.*, Erlangen Edition, x., 26, 108; xiii., 205; xvi., 12, 16; xvii., 358; xix., 12, 51, 362; lii., 307.

Our communion with God means also a certainty that our sins are forgiven.

§3. The Reformers' expressions for the contents of this faith are often incomplete, since they emphasise only the certainty of the forgiveness of sins, as, *e.g.*, in the passage in the Apology above quoted. But they believed that the life of faith, which is a life with God, contains more than this, as may be seen in the Augsburg Confession, where it is said that the knowledge of the gracious God who forgives our sins is continued in confidence in His care and providence, and therefore in confidence that He will help us as over against the world.

It is a great merit of Ritschl's that he drew attention again to this point, for it follows that the Reformers held that we are certain that God forgives our sins only when we submit ourselves to the operations of the gracious God with confidence in His help for every situation in life. Certainty of forgiveness is no doubt the first thing in Christian faith in this sense: that any Christian who is morally mature, will regard it, and ought to regard it, as the pre-supposition for all other experiences of God's grace; but it is not necessary that the certainty of forgiveness should always come first *in point of time* in the life of faith. Still less is it right to regard it as a thing apart from the rest of that life. That network of facts which environs us in the Christian brotherhood is all of it certainly a declaration to us that God desires to forgive us our sins; but in that case it cannot be our business to strive after a certainty of forgiveness as something quite distinct from the other blessings of faith. The facts which reach their common conclusion in our environment by the Christian brotherhood are indeed the ground of our certainty of forgiveness; but they are such because of that peculiar significance they have, which gives us all our certainty of the reality of God and of His grace. This significance of the facts whereby God lifts us to Himself is of such a nature that if it has given us a heartfelt confidence in God's love and care, it will also in due time give us experience of God's forgiveness. Indeed, it is self-evident that the same facts which convince of God's love at all, must also set forth His willingness to forgive our sins. The objective forces which work upon the Christian have been the

instruments of placing him in such a position that he has access to the Father. Necessarily he will see that his very understanding this to be his actual position implies the further fact that God is ready to forgive his sins. If therefore our faith means that we understand the God who is speaking to us through those forces, then the forgiveness of sins is implied in the very foundation of faith, and is as sure and real to faith as faith is itself.

Forgiveness is not the momentary act of an official.

§4. When a Christian becomes inwardly aware of the forgiveness which is bestowed upon him, this forgiveness is not conceived by him as a single act wrought by church officials; Luther warns us to beware "of thinking that the act of forgiveness is all done in a single moment, when the absolution is pronounced."[1] Luther sees the forgiveness of sins to be a process that is going on in the whole kingdom of Christ, "which lasts for ever without ceasing. For just as the sun shines and illuminates none the less brightly when I close my eyes, so this throne of grace, or this forgiveness of sins, is always there, even although I fall. And just as I see the sun again when I re-open my eyes, so also I have forgiveness of sins once more when I look up and come back to Christ. Wherefore we are not to measure forgiveness so narrowly as the fools dream."[2] We belong, by baptism and Christian training, to the brotherhood which Christ adorns with His love; herein, then, we have before us the fact that God desires to forgive us. Of course it is essential that we do not regard our connection with the Christian brotherhood merely as a course in life that has valuable consequences, but that we understand it as a message of God to us. When we do so understand it, then we necessarily place ourselves in that relation of dependence upon the Christian brotherhood which Luther describes by the well-known expression in the Greater Catechism, where he says that the church is our mother. Ritschl adopted this idea as the principle which every churchly theology must maintain against separatist endeavours; but for doing so he

(1) Erlangen Edition, xi., 319.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 294; the same simile occurs in xi., 320f., and in xl., 312f.

frequently had to endure the reproach, even from "churchly" theologians of our time, that this was a relapse into Roman Catholic ways of thinking. But in spite of this it should not be difficult to see the difference between the doctrine inherited from Luther and upheld by Ritschl on the one hand, and the Roman Catholic doctrine on the other. According to the Catholic conception, the essential thing is to suffer or have imposed *on us* a state of dependence on the church, and to submit to her summons to obedience to her laws. According to the conception followed by Ritschl, the essential point is that in the light of our knowledge of Christ we should understand our dependence on the Christian brotherhood to be *the expression of the grace of God that is turned towards us.* If our souls have attained this attitude towards the Christian brotherhood, then we can indeed regard the forgiveness of sins as an unchanging blessing that is given to us as the sun that shines above us, as the firmament that is vaulted broad and far above us, or the covering of our couch that enwraps us.[1] Luther used all these pictures to express the fact that the forgiveness bestowed upon us is continuous, that it is implied in the basis of faith, and that therefore it is an indwelling element in every phase of faith.

The experience of forgiveness comes as an astounding revelation.

§5. God's way of turning to us in Christ lifts us into communion with Him because our consciousness of reconciliation enables us to set the certainty of it over against the feeling of our guilt. Therefore we are not to behave as though that had not happened for us, but we are to open our eyes to see what God has done for us. We are to ask daily forgiveness from God, as the Father "who does not deal with us in severity, but can indeed bear with us somewhat, and can overlook much that we do."[2] And yet in such case it might seem as if forgiveness were a mere matter of course in a Christian's eyes. The fact is rather that to everyone who really experiences it, forgiveness comes as an astounding revelation of love. This reflection,

(1) cf., Erlangen Edition, xiv., 213; l., 249; Latin works, iv., 143.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 186.

correct as it undeniably is, has caused much confusion. For it may easily seem that in such case the Christian, in seeking forgiveness, must first forget all the evidences of God's love that he presently possesses. But is it really so, in personal intercourse, that all the bonds of confidence between two persons must be broken before the one can experience forgiveness from the other?

It is certainly quite otherwise, So also in our communion with God, the convincing power of His revelation may abide with us, even although we sin, and may prevent the trouble caused by our sense of guilt. And yet in each case we only find anew how God is stronger than our heart. The impression, indeed, that God's love seeks us out in spite of our sinning will not cease; it will never grow old, but will constantly open afresh to us the gates of a new life. So we are not by any means to push away from our hearts all belief that God is gracious to us, and give ourselves over to a deep sense of God's anger against us, all with the idea that only so do we treat our guilt seriously, and only so can we receive forgiveness. It may be the case that a Christian does believe that he feels all the awful anger of God, because he feels deeply the burden of his guilt, and looks forward to a desolate life. If he remains in that condition and so perishes inwardly, he does indeed fall before the judgment of God, who is a God, not of the dead, but of the living. But let him keep coming to Christ and to His grace, and he will find there a defence even against the anger of God. It can never be the duty of a Christian to work himself violently into a feeling that he has been rejected by God. All violent and deliberate fanaticism is of the evil one.

Luther's view of the matter.

§6. Certainly all experience teaches that on the other hand no Christian is able to maintain himself unwaveringly at the purest altitude of childlike trust in God. Even he who is preserved from grosser sins will nevertheless feel within him that self-condemnation which one's moral poverty keeps before one's eyes, and he will feel it more and more keenly just as he grows more and more sensitive to the

weight of moral obligations. It is inevitable also that the difficulties of life will at times overmaster one's tone so seriously that the weary soul will let go all that it has hitherto gained of Christian joy in life. It holds good, therefore, of the most experienced of Christians that we must say with Luther: "although it is not necessary that he should be altogether without fear. For nature always remains within us, which is weak, and cannot stand without fear of death and Christ's judgment."[1] Luther by no means believes that every one must fight the same inner battles as himself. "God holds the measures here, so that He will lay upon each one his cross according to his own person, according as he is strong and able to carry it."[2] Thus he says that God sometimes tries His great saints, and exercises them with the "desertio gratiae" (deprivation of grace), "and then a man feels in his heart just as though God and His grace had deserted it, and would no more of him, and wherever he turns he sees naught but anger and terror only. But not every one suffers such great trial, nor does anyone understand it save he who experiences it."[3] Luther admits to himself, too, that such inner battles may have their cause in imperfect Christian knowledge; they were experienced "especially in the blindness and darkness of the Papacy, where they had little true consolation."[4]

But, above all things, Luther saw in these circumstances a suffering which the Christian cannot avoid, but not an achievement which he is to accomplish. It is only in lives of thoughtless pleasure that such suffering can possibly be entirely absent. "Therefore such fearsome persons are indeed nearer their salvation than the reckless and wilful who have neither fear nor care for comfort all day long."[5] But as we ought not to pray for trial but to be kept from it,[6] so also it is folly to count it a duty to have trials, wherein we lose sight of God's grace. Whenever Christians search earnestly what is the basis of the assurance of faith, or whenever they come to serious knowledge

(1) Erlangen Edition, x., 77. (2) Erlangen Edition, ix., 87.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xi., 21. (4) Erlangen Edition, ix., 87.

(5) Erlangen Edition, x., 76. (6) Compare Erlangen Edition, ix., 88.

of duty, they are met by the contrast between their own unworthiness and God's unhesitating love. But the Christian is not to aim with conscious purpose at having this experience of regret. He is rather to aim always and only to do the positive duties of the Christian life. Only amid the light of that life does a true regret arise out of and instead of the languid discomfort of the sinner. The sinful will never brings forth such regret by any process of its own.[1] Hence repentance does not mean purposed self-chastisement, but, as Luther says, "a real bettering and change of the entire life."[2] Similarly, "if thou wilt confess sin, then have a care that thou lookest and thinkest far more on thy future than on thy past life." "For it is easy to forgive that wherein thou hast sinned already. Therefore must thou see to it how thou mayest begin another life, and that thou feelest in thy soul that thy former life irks thee, and that thou hast had enough of it."[3] Amid such endeavours the Christian will and ought to find that he cannot help himself by any mere straining of his own will, but that he draws strength from his experience of God's love. "This despairing and seeking of grace is not to be something that lasts for an hour or a time and then leaves off; but all our work, words and thoughts, while we live here on earth, tend to nought save increase of distrust of self, of abiding rest in God's grace and of desire and yearning for Him."[4] On the other hand, Luther says that a wish to stay in the despair of remorse and in fear because of sin is an abuse of that fear. The longer a man thus keeps looking at his sins "the worse things become, and the man lives in constant doubt."[5] That carefully purposed regret which the sinner seeks to bring about of his own direct resolve needs to be unmasked, says Luther, for it is the mistaken effort of man to set himself right again in the eyes of God.[6] He says that the man who uses fear and regret unwisely "only increases them and remains

(1) Erlangen Edition, xxvii., 392. (2) Erlangen Edition, xi., 290.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xi., 211.

(4) Erlangen Edition, xv., 442.

(5) Erlangen Edition, xvii., 434; compare xlix., 12: "It would be well indeed for us if we could only learn and take well to heart how Christ says and testifies with His own mouth that it is against His will, and hurts him when any Christian's heart is sad or fearful."

(6) Compare my essay, "Repentance in the Protestant Christian.' Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 1891, p. 37ff.

in them, as though he would purify himself from his sins by doing so; but nothing comes of it."[1] On the contrary, the Christian should set it clearly before himself that he already has God's forgiveness. For it is God's doing that he finds himself within the sphere of the Christian brotherhood, where he meets with Christ, and where he is trained to understand Him by innumerable influences of Christian ways of thought and Christian conduct. These facts are to be to the Christian God's declaration of His gracious intention towards him, and when he reflects upon them he is not to think, if he falls into sin, that "therefore God has forsaken him and cast him away as a worthless tool"; but he is to take comfort in the thought "that he is in the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of that grace which is mightier far than sin."[2]

Such trust toward God is our perfect communion with Him in all our daily affairs.

§7. In this faith we are lifted up to God, and because of its objective basis it is a faith in reconciliation to God, although it may not always and continuously take on the form of certainty of forgiveness. Now it would be a strange proceeding for one who had grasped that fact to aim nevertheless at devising for himself some additional special communion with God, and at bringing about the same by some special effort. The real man of faith does not creep into the corner of lonely contemplation in order to gaze on divine things as on a picture;[3] he rather seeks experience of God, and to be aware of Him in His activity as the almighty and life-creating Spirit. Hence the Christian who has any care to remain in that union with God which God Himself has begun with him, will turn his attention to those experiences in which this faith affects all relationships of life, and proves itself to be the power of God making a new

(1) Erlangen Edition, x., 76.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 318; compare xvi., 139.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xv., 186: "The clergy, especially those who stick in the monasteries, boast that they live a life of contemplation; they know just as much of a contemplative life as a goose knows of the Psalter. Wherefore let that go; our Lord God has not commanded thee *to sit and gaze luxuriously up into heaven as they do who fancy that such is a contemplative life.*" "Faith is a thing of such a sort that it sets one right everywhere and in all affairs. This is the truly contemplative life." "Therefore all this sort of faith comes to pass without any work of ours, and it is not my work but God's; nothing is necessary to make it save the Word which creates faith in the heart." "That is a truly contemplative life; it consists not in fleeting thoughts, but in a certain knowledge.' Compare xliii., 41f

man of him. "Through faith shalt thou experience the might and mercy of the Father, and experience Him to be a Comforter and Life-giver."[1] "To name God outwardly with thy mouth, or to pray to Him with kneelings and postures, all this is not having God; but it is when thou trustest Him heartily, and and when thou lookest to him for all goodness, grace and favour, whether in doing or suffering, in life or death, in love or sorrow."[2] "To have a God means to trust God."[3] "And to hang upon Him with the heart is nothing else than to trust one's self utterly to Him."[4] What else, then, can communion with God mean if it be not to have Him, to feel His power, to hang upon Him with the heart, "since he is the one eternal Good, the eternal wellspring running over with pure goodness and flowing with everything that is or is called good"?[5] Instead of giving ourselves up to a luxurious contemplation, in which, after all, one only busies himself with his own fancies, we are to live the life of faith which arises within us by our contact with God through that almighty fact, His own utterance.[6] As we apply this faith to every kind of situation in life, we receive all things from God and we answer Him by joy in that power of His which renews us marvellously, and makes us free men as over against the world. The true worship of God, and therefore the true communion with God, is life in the "freedom of a Christian man."[7] A coming to God which did not include at the same time a new valuation of what we experience and of what we are in the world, would not be a coming to the God revealed in Jesus Christ, but to the hidden God of mysticism. It would therefore be a kind of piety which no Protestant need feel it his duty to possess. It belongs to the Roman Catholic way of thinking, which resists the view of the world which God desires to see in His own children. "Now if a man have a wife, or a wife is occupied with her child and tends it, the Roman Catholic teachers say that these have not clean hearts because all this cannot happen without thoughts that attach

(1) Erlangen Edition, xv., 329. (2) Erlangen Edition, xvi., 131; compare xi., 337
(3) Erlangen Edition, lii., 301. (4) Greater Catechism, I., 15; compare section 28.
(5) Greater Catechism, section 25. (6) Erlangen Edition, xv., 432,
(7) Erlangen Edition, viii., 141.

to such things. Now we must think, yea, daily, of food, of money, of work, and other things; yet these are things from which, as they say, we ought to be quite free, so that we may have no thought but to sit and speculate on heaven, and meditate on nothing else than God." "Thus have the blind guides led us, and they have written countless books full of such speculation as to how men are to become free from things."[1] If Christ Himself were measured by the standard of this kind of piety, even He, as Luther properly remarks, would appear to have no perfect communion with God; for His calling bound Him to the world, and "where then did His heart remain the while and his thoughts, that ought, forsooth, to be absorbed with God alone?" "To have nothing to do with outward, worldly matters and things, but to live, cut off from all these, a life of spiritual contemplation; this is not a guiding and a teaching according to faith."[2] Thus such sort of flight from the world seems to Luther not only an abandonment of moral duties, but also a hindrance to faith or true communion with God.

What is the true separation from the world?

§8. The Christian certainly does know one kind of flight from the world, without which he could not come to God; if Christianity did not share the tendency of all genuine piety to flee from the world, then the spread of mysticism in the church would be quite inexplicable. But Luther felt that he had really found a deeper significance and a more powerful method for Christian denial of the world than the elder church had done. The tendency of the religious nature to forsake the world reaches its perfect satisfaction exactly when the gospel, as Luther understands it, lets us find our God in the midst of our relations to the world and in strong interest therein, and gives us then the great joy in communion with the God who thus makes us blessed. Hence Luther demands, first of all, faithful work in a worldly calling as a part of the priestly duty of the Christian, and therefore as necessary to our communion with God.

(1) Erlangen Edition, li., 290.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 150; compare ix., 81, 280-81; x., 416.

From this follows Luther's opposition to the Catholic idea of fleeing from the world. "They do not forsake or flee from the world (as they dream). Thou mayest be in whatever position, life, and existence thou choosest (for thou must indeed be somewhere, since thou livest on earth); in none of these does God sever thee from the people, but rather places thee among them; for every human being is created and born for the sake of others. Where thou art now (say I), and in whatever position thou mayest be found, there art thou to flee from the world."[1] Here Luther expounds the true flight from the world in this sense, that while the Christian lives amid the arrangements of the world and enjoys its good things, he does not pin his heart to it,[2] but uses it as a means for eternal bliss.

In another passage he writes: "See, this is to die to the world and to be without fear, namely, to be troubled about nothing save what God wills, to speak nothing save what pleases Him, and what I know are His words; in short, that I so live and so do, that I know the works are His works, and that I am certain *that my whole life, inward and outward alike, is His;* then I am cut off from the world and still am in the world."[3] Thus Luther recognises the true world-flight in the longing of the Christian for an eternal good which is not to be found in the world, and in the fact that in spite of this he seeks and finds God in all that he does and suffers here "in his ordinary life and rank." The former makes us strangers in the world, but the latter sets us free from that inner bondage to the world which is rendered all the heavier by our longing for a bliss that is above the world. The first is in a sense the natural world-fleeing instinct of all genuine religions, the second is that inner deliverance from the world which our faith effects by

(1) Erlangen Edition, viii., 272; compare l., 248. To become holy is said to mean to be withdrawn from the world. But "the holiest rank or life on earth is nothing else than the ordinary Christian rank." Compare xxix., 327.

(2) Compare xxxv., 220; "Hence the world is to the Christian sheer night and darkness which faith makes since it clings to the blood of Christ alone, and neither regards nor pays heed to aught else." Thus, when the Christian asks what is the ground of his hope of life, the world fades away for him in darkness. That is the world-flight of faith, in which we recognise and seek for Christ alone as our Helper. Compare the description of the Christian's independence of the world, xxxv., 247.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xv., 412. We read in this passage also: "No one is less in the world than a Christian, and no one is more worldly than a Christian." This sentence would make an admirable summary of all those thoughts of Luther's which we have just expounded; but just at this point, in the second half of the sentence, Luther lets the main point escape him. For he goes on to say: "That is, the world observes him more, and the devil fights harder against him, than against the heathen."

letting the Christian find his God amid his earthly life. We are truly cut off from the world only when we learn to "use it" aright, *i.e.*, when we rule it through faith. Of course, since the Christian breaks loose from the world in this way, he misses the reputation for piety which those who forsake the world in the usual way take to themselves and easily gain from people round them, who say: This man does not live like a common man, wherefore he must be a saint."[1] "For the truth does not so shine and glitter, because she does not make herself plain to calculation. For example, when an ordinary Christian hears the gospel along with others, believes, uses the sacrament, lives spiritually at home in his house with wife and children, that does not shine like the fair and clever lies of a holy Carthusian or hermit, who lives apart from the people and claims to be a holy servant of God."[2] Yet without doubt there is a greater depth and strength of world-abnegation in that fruit of faith which makes us feel free from the mastery of the world even amid the actual experience of the world's influence, and which makes us feel the limits and sufferings laid on us by the world to be a very help and a blessing. For we could not be more thoroughly separated than this from that which is indeed the world to the natural man: it is the basis of his hopes of life, it is the sovereign before whom he bows, the blind force before which he trembles. But certainly again this overcoming of the world which Christian faith works is much harder than that contempt for the world "which makes itself plain to calculation," or in other words follows nothing but the fine principle that God is something other than the world. A man can accomplish this latter of himself, but not the former. "Only try it with earnestness, and with true wrestling of conscience, then shalt thou surely know it."[3]

It is only by stern fight that we can secure this inner freedom from the world, and this peace "that can still the heart; not when there is no misfortune, but in the very midst of it."[4] So Luther had to say concerning himself: "At times I believe,

(1) Erlangen Edition, xx., I., 18. (2) Erlangen Edition, ix., 81; compare xlix., 303-306.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xii., 153; compare xvi., 165; xviii., 300: xix., 17, 18.
(4) Erlangen Edition, xi., 352

at times I do not believe; sometimes I am joyous, sometimes I am sad."[1] And yet he can say of the liberty brought by faith: "It is a true and continual peace, which abides for ever and is invincible,"[2] because the inner state is no product of human reflection, but comes only of the revelation of God which continues in power that passes not away. "As the joy of the godless never rightly reaches the heart, so also the sorrow of the Christian never goes to the bottom of his heart."[3] All that which the world can give or take away, and all the sum of it, could never be added up into a foundation for a joy that should so outweigh all our sorrow. We do not create it for ourselves; but we receive it when we find God in Christ.

Thus we may put away from our thoughts all temptation to seek, in utmost disregard of the world, for a fellowship with a God whose revelations come only to solitary souls, and that within the realm of their imagination. For inward freedom from the world is indeed sought for in this way but never found. We have communion with God—He works on us, and we turn to Him—when we receive from Him the strength in which we overcome the world, and when with joy and gratitude we use the same. If we are in contact with the living God, we must necessarily experience His creative power; hence our communion with Him comes to perfection only when we experience that God is making something of us, namely, beings that are distinct from the world. Were our God something inert, then we might be able to enjoy the bliss of communion with Him in a world-forgetting contemplation. But since He is the Living Power which presses in upon us amid and by all the complexity of our lives, we must let Him touch and lift us amid that complexity if we would enjoy the bliss of a real communion with Him.

Of freedom and grateful joy, as communion with God.

§9. Our turning towards God comes to its perfect fulness in our grateful joy at what God makes of us. This normal attitude of Christian piety is classically described in Luther's treatise, "Of

(1) Erlangen Edition, xix., 76. (2) Erlangen Edition, xi., 353; l., 231.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xv., 108; compare vii., 116.

the freedom of a Christian man,"[1] and it is Ritschl's great merit to have brought this ideal of Christian piety once more to the front as the practical principle of the Reformation, and to have taken up once more the corresponding renovation of theology which the Reformers left incomplete.

In that treatise Luther describes the inner life of the Christian which springs from redemption. It is in essence nothing other than Christian freedom, *i.e.*, faith.[2] From this faith are excluded all "speculationes, meditationes, et quidquid per animae studia geri potest";[3] it is nothing but the "cognitio Christi Jesu," that understanding of Christ with which the "sacro sanctum Dei verbum" (the most sacred word of God), the gospel of Christ, makes us rich and blessed.[4] Through *this* faith we enter into that wonderful fellowship with Christ through which our sin becomes something that belongs to His Person, and His relation towards God and towards the world becomes our own. This fellowship is all a receiving and giving, and these are perfectly realised in our understanding of the Person of Christ, for that is a faith which He awakens in us and which we base on Him.[5] And the riches we thus receive constitute the whole inner condition of the believer; herein indeed he finds himself brought into the same attitude as Christ holds towards God and towards the world. When we recognise in Christ the God who desires to reconcile us to Himself, we are ourselves raised to the priestly dignity of Christ. "Per spiritum fidei," *i.e.*, by the spirit of faith, that is to say, amid those inward experiences we gain courage to come so near to God that we see in Him really a Father who clasps us to His heart.[6] In proportion as God is present to us in Christ, and we can lay hold on Him there, we have this priestly freedom of communion with Him.

(1) Compare Ritschl's "Doctrine of Justification and Atonement," 2nd Edition, i., 181f.

(2) Compare Luther, Opp. var. Arg., iv., 266: "Haec est christiana illa libertas, fides nostra."

(3) Speculations, meditations, and whatsoever can be carried on by effort of the soul itself.

(4) Ibidem, 221-223.

(5) Hence marriage is but a poor copy of that fellowship; cf. the same, p. 227.

(6) Ibidem. 232.

The kingship of the believer.

§10. Luther declares this priestly power of the believer to be the greatest good we have through Christ.[1] Yet he prefaces his exposition of this by a description of the believer's *kingly* power, and his description of the former leads him again to describe the latter. He does so for this reason, that the same understanding of Christ, the same "fides" which makes us priests before God exalts us as kings over the world. For the believer who has come to understand that God turns to him in Christ cannot enjoy that communion with God *without being conscious that therewith a change has come over his whole being.*

The exercise of his priesthood necessarily implies that in his communion with God he is spiritually lord over those very things which have caused him suffering in the realm of worldly things, for although he still feels their bitterness, he nevertheless understands them and uses them as God's gift to bring him blessedness. This spiritual kingship enjoyed amid subjection, free and powerful amid overwhelming trouble, is unattainable by the man who has not been brought near God through faith, and just as impossible is it for a man to enjoy that nearness to God without feeling and acting as a new creature over against the world, as the wonderful impulses of this great power beat within him. Any other supposed communion with God but this experience of what God means to make of us, lacks that humility in which the soul really yields to God. If, then, we turn to the Redeemer only in the sense that our human sympathy is stirred for Him, in love and sorrow, then Luther did not speak one whit too strongly when he said that such ways are "puerilia et muliebria deliramenta"[2] (childish and effeminate hysterics). Instead of such feeble artifices, which are always a practical denial of the deity of Christ, we are to recognise God in Christ and to become free men by utter submission to Him.[3]

(1) Ibidem, 231.

(2) Luther, Opp. var. arg., iv., 233; cf. Kritische Gesamtausg, I., 341 Erlangen Edition, x., 155; xi., 154f.

(3) This topic, handled in "De Libertate Christiana," is also fully discussed in Erlangen Edition, xv., 262ff.; xxxv., 246f.; li., 398. The idea of the believer's spiritual lordship over the world is very often taken up. Comp. *e.g.*, x., 257; viii., 141; xi., 207; xii., 282; xiv., 338; xxxv., 130ff. On the other hand, Luther speaks of "the priestly power of believers," generally, in the sense that they have received power to open the kingdom of heaven to others.

Christian humility.

§11. The Christian's submission and his freedom are both inseparably included in his communion with God, yet at different moments we may prefer to call the whole by either name. Our communion with God is, first of all, utter submission to His majesty. But submission is possible only when God makes us certain of Himself and of His grace, or, in other words, when He is present to us and comprehensible to us in the historical figure of Christ. It is only when our surrender is joyful that we do fully submit ourselves. This attitude of the heart which finds compensation for all life's burdens in a conscious submission to God's guidance has been pointed out by Ritschl as the same as that gladsome lowliness manifested by Jesus Himself.[1]

1. This religious lowliness, or humility as Luther translates it, is experienced in the first place as a condition in which God places us, although there is bound up with it the consciousness of the freest self-decision. For that joy in God which is essential to a true submission to what He may ordain is awakened in our hearts only when God becomes an "objectum amabile" (a lovable object) to us by some actual proof of His love.[2] The heart does not become "a quiet, humble dwelling-place of God" until we are able to recognise Him as our Father; "for when I come to know that, then I let Him rule as He will, and take Him alone as all in all."[3] The man who tries to submit or to humble himself before God in any other way than under this touch of God Himself achieves only a hypocritical humility, and remains inwardly far from God.[4] For the more and the worse a man tortures himself to obtain eternal life, the less he attains to it. He must be humbled, and must crave the Spirit of God alone. The man who means to make himself blessed by works is the devil's own for ever.[5]

2. Secondly, that humility in which we are truly united with God is always likewise a behaviour towards the world

(1) cf. Ritschl, Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, 2nd Edition, iii., 587.

(2) cf. "Apologie der C.A.," iii., 8. (3) Erlangen Edition, xii., 288.

(4) Hence it is that only the mistaken, "manufactured" humility is self-conscious. "True humility never knows that it is humble." "Humility is so tender and exquisite that it cannot bear the sight of itself," Erlangen Edition, xlv., 236ff. "It is a secret of God's;" viii., 78.

(5) Erlangen Edition, xvi., 468.

that corresponds exactly to the attitude in which the salvation God has given is enjoyed.[1] For joyful self-surrender to the living God means willing submission to those laws and arrangements by which He works on us on every side and actively influences our life to its very depths. That man alone is humble who finds in prosperity God's great claim upon Him, who sees in the boundlessness of things God's almighty wisdom, and who finds in incomprehensible suffering God's love: for then only is the real man, the actual man who has a story, actually submissive to God. Then, when this is the case, the man does indeed possess that spiritual sovereignty over the world which gives him a share in the kingdom of God and makes him blessed. Hence Luther, in the passage quoted above,[2] after describing humility as a heart that is quiet and contented before God, straightway goes on to say: "It must come to pass that the heart recognises God's glory, God's power, God's wisdom. *For then it lets God rule all things;* it knows that all things are works of God, and therefore it can be terrified at nothing." "Thus there grows in us undaunted defiance against all that is on the world, for we have God, and all that is God's; we do all that we are to do, and we are not afraid."[3] It is the same power that works for us, although in another direction, when humility guards a man who has reached the pinnacle of success and is enjoying earthly riches, from losing the inner freedom of the children of God, and setting up a mistaken independence. Humility then overcomes that pressure of the world which threatens to drive men into a narrow trust in self, and so it proves itself to be a real communion with the life-giving and life-saving God.

The fear of God.

§12. Another expression for that inward submission in which we commune with God is "the fear of God." To the Christian this fear is not a momentary horror at God's mysterious power over our life.[4]

(1) cf. Ritschl, in the volume quoted above, 592. (2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 288.

(3) Similarly he describes (Erlangen Edition, xi., 337) the thoroughly humble heart which God desires by saying that it is nothing other than trust and confidence in God, without whose sole help and deliverance man can do nothing.

(4) With this fear is combined the "optare non esse deum" (the wish that God did not exist) var. arg., i., 69.

It is always possible for the creature moved by its love of life to escape from this emotion into a renewed calm forgetfulness of God. But the Christian fear of God is rather that deep and joyful acknowledgment of God as the only mighty and living One, which we may and ought always to feel. "It is thus we must understand the fear mentioned in the Scriptures; it does not denote a fear or a terror lasting for an instant, but it is our whole life and being walking in reverence and awe before God.[1] What we, following the Scriptures, call the fear of God, is not terror or dread, but an awe that holds God in reverence, and that is to remain in a Christian, just as a good child *fears* its father."[2] Thus the Christian's fear of God is the reverence of the child for that Father within whose mighty care it feels itself sheltered.[3] The Christian fears the Father whom he recognises in Christ, "not on account of the pain and punishment, as unchristian men and the devil fear Him," but because he sees before his eyes the actual power of God giving him blessing; and he fears to take one step beyond the sphere of that blessed power "as a good child fears, and will not arouse its father's anger, or do anything that might not please him."[4] Here again we see that the communion of man with God can take place only as an experience caused in the man by God Himself. For anyone can work up for himself those feelings of horror that arise from a sense of inevitable dependence on a power we dread, and such feelings are to be found, too, in any Christian life;[5] but, on the other hand, that fear of God which looks at God Himself, and is therefore true communion with Him, arises only in the soul that experiences the emancipating power of the Gospel amid contact with the Christian brotherhood, through Christian training, custom, and preaching. But it is only complete when we have found in Christ the God that draws back to Himself even those who

(1) Erlangen Edition, xxxiv., 174. (2) Erlangen Edition, xviii., 349.

(3) Erlangen Edition, lvii., 56. (4) Erlangen Edition, li., 365; cf. xvi., 187.

(5) But "Sine timore inferni nullus est nec esse debet nisi sit perfectissimus. Ideo justorum timor semper est mixtus sancto et servili, sed proficiunt de servili magis magisque ad sanctum donec nihil nisi deum timeant." Var. arg. i., 73. (No one is free from fear of the infernal one, nor ought we to be so, unless we be utterly perfected. So the fear of the just is always a mingling of the devout and the servile. But they go on from the servile more and more to the devout, until they fear nothing except God).

feel deeply estranged from Him by the sense of their own guilt.[1]

The Christian's love to God: as shown in love to his neighbour.

§13. In Jesus' combination of the two sublimest commandments of the Old Testament, He described the normal attitude of the human soul towards God as love to Him. Nevertheless, He and the apostles rarely used that expression in their testimony concerning their own communion with God; and this leads us to observe that its use may lead to mistakes.[2] It is especially instructive in this connection to note how seldom the epistles of the New Testament speak of a love to Christ. The reason why the expression is thus avoided is explained by Ritschl in the following passage: "That formula does not indicate whether, in our love for Christ, we set ourselves on equality with Him or subject ourselves to Him. But the expression, 'faith in Christ,' implies confession of His deity and of His sovereignty, and therefore excludes the possibility of equality with Him."[3] The expression for communion with God most frequently used in the New Testament is that of "reverent trust in Him," and the reason doubtless is that just such reverent trust fulfils the command to love God. If we are not merely speculating in general concerning love to Him, but thinking of that particular form of it which is prescribed by the nature of the God that Christ reveals, then it is not difficult to see that to have faith in the true sense is to have love to God. We may by no means lose sight of the high command, "Love God," but, at the same time, this is not to be abused by reading into it an arbitrary meaning, and calling the fruitless play of imagination with its own dreams a holy thing. Luther once defined love thus: "To love means to carry a good heart, and to favour all that is good; to be heartily kind, helpful, and sweet to every man, and

(1) There can be no communion with God without awe under the sense of the holy power of goodness; when that awe ceases, communion with God ceases also. (Compare Luther, Erlangen Edition, xi.. 248): "We have prophets in this country, up and down, who teach the people a courage that is all too free, and bid them talk with the High Majesty as with a cobbler's lad. These impudent and haughty souls no man should follow, if he love himself." (Compare the same volume, p. 194).

(2) Compare Ritschl, "Lehre von der Rechttertigung und Versöhnung,' 2nd Edition, vol. ii., 99 f.

(3) Ibid, iii. 552.

not to laugh at his sorrow or misfortune."[1] It is clear that we can love men in this way; but we cannot so love God. If this were all of love, then we could love God only indirectly, namely, by making God's purpose and work our own through willingness to help our neighbours. In that case love to God could be carried out only in the form of love to our neighbours, as Luther frequently declares. He puts the question: "How may love of a neighbour be the fulfilling of the law, when we ought to love God above all things, even above our neighbours? Answer: Christ Himself solved this, for He says, in Matthew xxii., "The second commandment is like unto the first," and He makes of love to God and love to one's neighbour an equal love. And this for the reason, first, that God does not need our work and kindness, but thus points us to our neighbours that we may do for these what we desired to do for Him. He wants nothing more than that we trust Him and hold Him to be God. For even the preaching of His glory and our praising and thanking Him take place on earth in order that our neighbours may be converted and brought to God thereby. And yet all this is called love to God, and is done from love to God, yet really to the use and profit of our neighbours only."

"It is thus we are to find and love God, thus are we to serve Him and do Him good if we wish to serve Him and do good to Him: and so the command of love to God is brought down altogether into love for our neighbours."[2] And Luther says in paradoxical fashion that God would rather forego our service of Himself than our service of our neighbours,[3] and he insists earnestly that when we find some work that we wish to do for benefit to God and not for our neighbours alone, then are we to count that work an evil thing.[4] And starting from this argument, too, he went on to utter his disapproval of misleading ideals set up in the mystics' theory of love to God; he says: "Here now is a check given to those slippery and skipping souls who seek God only in great and glorious things, who thirst after His

(1) Erlangen Edition, xliii., 152,
(2) Erlangen Edition, viii., 65f.; comp. x., 109; xv., 40f.; xxii., 332; xvii., 260-3.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xiii., 168; comp. xiv., 155.
(4) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 59; x., 25, 146; xvii., 152.

greatness, who bore through heaven, and think that they are serving and loving God by such noble ways, while all the time they are betraying Him and pass by Him in their neighbours here on earth in whom He desires to be loved and honoured." "For therefore did He put from Him the form of God and put on the form of a servant, that He might draw our love for Him down and fasten it on our neighbours, whom we leave lying here, and gaze the while into heaven thinking to show God great love and service."[1]

The Christian's love to God: its immediate manifestation.

§14. Yet Luther knows also of a love to God which is rendered directly to Himself, and this is joy in God.[2] All love is joy in personal life; joy in our neighbour's claims upon us is love for our neighbours; joy in God's claim upon us is love to God. And as we are to show the former when our neighbour is in trouble, so the latter is manifested amid troubles of our own. Joy in God, the "tasting and seeing how gracious the Lord is," "all this does faith that is tried bring to us at the end of our travail. For so long as the strife and trial last faith is in travail, and all is hard and bitter; we neither taste nor see any sweetness in God. But as soon as the evil hour is past, if we endure it and abide, then comes God's sweetness, and God becomes so dear, so pleasant, and so sweet to the heart that we seek nothing rather than more strife and more trial and travail."[3] Thus love to God springs from the experience that He comes personally near to us, that He lifts us inwardly above our trouble, and lets us find peace and blessedness amid conflict and suffering.[4] This edification is never-ending, for it helps us not simply in this particular or in that, but makes entirely new men of us, and in our joy over this, we love God as He would have us love Him.

The love for God thus awakened may be required of us by a commandment, because necessarily it is a kind of regulative

(1) Erlangen Edition, viii., 66.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xvii., 257-60; v., 205 (heartfelt contentment, pleasure and love to Him).

(3) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 77.

(4) Cf. Erlangen Edition, ix., 38. "Love to God is nothing else than gratitude for unspeakable kindness received."

of our behaviour, and we may say that in it we willingly acquiesce in what God commands and enjoins. "A true love to God says from the heart, 'Lord God, I am Thy creature; do with me what Thou wilt, it is all the same to me; I am indeed Thine, and I know that."[1] But these two things, the love God awakens and the love He claims, are together clearly nothing other than that true faith which is an actual communion with the Living God. Luther says, after a somewhat long discussion of the impossibility of our fulfilling this chief commandment if we love God only as a thief could love the hangman: "Just as God is satisfied *with my faith*, with my love for Him as a gentle God and a merciful Father of whom I love to hear, so He desires also that I aim all my works earthward and toward my neighbour only."[2] This view of the identity of love to God and faith is expressed in the countless passages in which Luther says God wants nothing of us save trust and faith; or, that faith is to be exercised towards God, and love towards our neighbours. And so, seeing that love to God is the joy caused by His coming near to us, Luther is able to say that love does not exactly result from faith, but it is the chief element in faith itself. "Now we have said above that such confidence and faith bring with them love and hope; but if we rightly consider it, love comes first, or at the same moment with faith. For I could not trust God if I did not think He desired to be favourable and gracious towards me, whereby I may become gracious towards Him, and may be moved to trust Him heartily and to expect from Him every good thing.[3] Thus the Christian's love to God does not move in an atmosphere of contemplation of inactive beauty. It arises when we actually experience the Living and Working God, manifesting His love and making us understand it, and so turning the rebellion and despair of our hearts into humility and consolation. The blessedness which grows up out of this spiritual and true contact with God is that joy in Him, which we call love for Him. Hence true love to

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 172; xvi., 426.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xvii., 260.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xvi., 131. The same connection of thought occurs in v., 204: "For no one can love Christ unless he trusts Him and takes comfort in Him." "Thus does the Lord desire us to think of Him, *that we love Him, and set our hearts upon Him.*"

God is widely different from the tenderness we are wont to manifest when some peculiarity of a stranger awakens in us a natural inclination towards him. It costs us dear to rescue and set free our spiritual personality from the fetters of such natural love. Love to God is quite different, and arises as we feel the freedom into which God's very own act emancipates us.

Luther's view of sensuous love to God.

§15. It may now seem that what we have said is contradicted by Luther's use of the features of natural love as illustrations of the Christian's love for God. And even if his doing so had meant that he had relapsed into the practice of Papists and conspirators who "talked and dreamed of trafficking with God,"[1] it would not be strange to find even in Luther such a sign of the powers of the past. We find him saying concerning the prophet of the Roman Catholic love for Christ:—"Saint Bernhard I hold very dear as the man among all those writers who preaches of Christ most sweetly; I follow him when he preaches Christ, and in the faith wherein St. Bernhard prayed, do I also pray to Christ."[2] But it cannot be affirmed at all that with all this attachment to St. Bernard, Luther ever allowed himself to be won by him to that love for God and Christ which only a monk can show. Indeed in the very passage quoted, he adds immediately that he does not follow the venerable man in anything which would make it appear that persons engaged in their worldly callings could not be perfect Christians.[3] But it is still more important to note how Luther developed his comparison of love to God and Christ with bridal love; for then we may see plainly that Bernhard's heartfelt yet effeminate piety acted only as an occasion for setting in motion Luther's own religious thinking, and the character of this was drawn entirely from his own correct understanding of the Revelation of God. Luther refused to know anything of any sort of contemplation save that which is incumbent upon every Christian without exception. Faith is to him the true life of contem-

(1) Erlangen Edition, li., 290.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xlvi,, 243; cf. on the other hand, xliv., 73; xlvii, 23, where he directly reproaches Bernhard for having fled from God in Christ, and for having resorted to a communion with the Virgin which was simply human tenderness.

(3) cf. also, Erlangen Edition, xliii., 43.

plation.[1] He does indeed compare faith's love towards God with the love of a child for its mother, and with that of the bride for the bridegroom as well; but by these pictures he illustrates simply the strength of the love,[2] and the confidence with which the believer can turn to Christ his Redeemer, who makes the believer owner even of His own great Kingdom.[3] When Luther speaks of love to Christ as the Bridegroom, he is thinking of the believer's receipt and enjoyment of the riches which Christ has bestowed upon the brotherhood, and not at all of an interchange of sensuous tenderness between Christ and the individual soul; and so he says it is the Christian brotherhood that is the Bride of Christ:—"In this faith we are all one Bride, one Christian church of this Bridegroom Christ."[4] That bridal love to Christ which Luther means is nothing than the faith which relies upon Him utterly, and joyfully acquiesces in His will. "He will have me say from the depths of my heart 'I am thine.' *But this union and this marriage come about through the faith that I rely upon Him freely and that He is mine.*"[5] However tender our love for Christ might be, if it claimed to be anything else than thankful trust in the God who turns towards us in the Redeemer,[6] Luther would regard it as a devotion invented of men and savouring of the flesh.[7] He knows indeed a love to God and Christ which God Himself awakens in us by making us happy and blessed through Christ. But the very earnestness of this experience makes him repudiate what is called the contemplative love of God in bitterest language: he says:—"It is sheer hypocrisy for a man to creep into a corner and think 'Oh, I will love God; Ah, how dearly I love God, He is my Father; Oh, how affectionate I am to God, and so forth.'"[8] Ritschl has shown how soon the tendency arose

(1) Erlangen Edition, xv., 187. (2) cf., Erlangen Edition, xv., 189; xiv., 15.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xv., 543.

(4) Ibid., xv., 547, Luther closes these discussions concerning love to Christ the Bridegroom with the characteristic turn: "The whole of the Christian life consists in these two things: Believe in God and Christ His Son; help thy neighbour: the whole gospel teaches this." Cf., xlvi., 154; l., 253; xxxv., 209.

(5) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 229; cf., Ritschl, "Geschichte des Pietismus," II, 32, and III, 212.

(6) Comp. a passage quoted above, ix., 38. (7) Erlangen Edition, xlvi., 247.

(8) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 172; cf., xxxv., 334. "No one shall taste Deity save as He wills to be tasted; and thus He wills: to wit that He shall be looked upon in the humanity of Christ. If thou dost not find the Deity thus, thou shalt never rest. Hence let them go on speculating and talking about contemplation, how everything is a wooing of God, and how we are always having a foretaste of eternal life, and how spiritual souls set about their life of contemplation. But do not thou learn to know God thus, I charge thee."

among the imitative followers of Luther to find the Reformer lacking in this respect, and to turn back to the pseudo-Augustinian writings of the middle ages for food they counted still better. Ritschl has proved this so thoroughly that his opponents contradict him in general, but they do not try to confute him in detail.[1]

Of sensuous contemplation of Christ.

§16. It is clear that Luther knew some who fell into the error of misusing what was really the strongest possible expression for the act of faith, namely love to God and Christ, by using the words as an expression for something that was utterly worthless. This utterly worthless thing was the so-called "contemplative life," and it was that contemplative love to God and Christ which Luther had found to be the highest spiritual enjoyment which monastic life knows. It is not of course difficult for an imaginative person so to conjure up the Person of Christ before himself that the picture shall take a kind of sensuous distinctness, and then the ground is ready for the contemplative love to Christ. Some one thinks he sees Jesus Himself, and *consequently* begins to commune with Him. But what such a person communes with in this fashion is not Christ Himself, but a picture that the man's own imagination has put together. It is of no use to object that the imagination itself is led and is made fertile by what has been given to the soul by the Christ of history. No doubt this is often the case with those who cultivate this contemplative love. And indeed it is quite true that every Christian who is united with Christ through experience of God's love does find such a picture arising in his mind; and the picture is also something truly sacred to him as a fruit of the new life which Christ has created within him. But such a picture does not bring us the possibility of communion with Christ, and this for the following reasons.

(1). For, first, there is no life in this picture, but in the historical Christ. It is in this latter that we trace the power which makes us certain of God and shows itself to be the working of God upon us. Even if there arises a picture of Christ in our minds in consequence of this experience, we are not to detach

(1) cf., Ritschl, "Geschichte des Pietismus," II, 1; IV. passim.

the picture from its foundations and look to it independently for the bestowal of divine life. Such an undertaking would be nothing else than man's flight from God's presence. It is not the phantom of our imagination that has power over us, but that portrait of Jesus which He Himself has stamped upon the faith He created and which is before us in the New Testament. From that alone does the Redeemer's power proceed, laying hold upon us, so that we are compelled to recognise in Him the God full of love and faithfulness, who is thus seeking us out in our earthly abandonment. Of course I can also say concerning my dead father that God sought me out and blessed me richly in all that He gave me through my father; and yet of a surety I should not have seen the hand of God in that if my Christian training had not shown me the historical Christ, and set free my innermost life. Of this Christ preached to us by the records, we can say "In thy light do we see light." For His appearance is for us the fact which makes this world God's world, and we can say that of nothing else. In Him alone does that God come to meet us, in the knowledge of whom we can understand for the first time the divine significance which all other facts have for our life. But all this of course appears but a poor affair to those who follow the monastic sort of worship of such imaginative pictures of Christ. They desire they say a personal relationship with the Christ who is personally present to them now. So they claim that the historical Christ is separated from us by many centuries, and that we come into immediate contact only with the after influences that he has left; hence towards Him we can only feel that quiet gratitude which we feel towards all human greatness in the past. To this we reply that this is simply the plea of unbelief, whose dim vision sees only the natural in history, and not the God who is now laying hold of us in that history. At the moment when our understanding of the historical Christ makes us see the Living God, we certainly do not think of the centuries that intervene between ourselves and the earthly life of Christ. That is the true presence of God in our hearts when we experience how the tidings He gives us through Christ place the world and our sin beneath our feet. And this is the presence

of Christ which we can *experience* in true communion with God, when His appearance in history comes home to our hearts as the most important thing in all the world. Christians cannot experience any other presence of God and Christ, and they desire to experience no other. Of course we may be reminded of those hymns which tell of the "sweetness of Jesus," and which certainly seem to point to a presence of Jesus in quite another sense, and to a much closer communion with Him; and Luther himself spoke of what it is "to taste the sweetness of God." But Luther by no means understood by this some quite peculiar enjoyment which we are to get by sore striving after, and *in addition* to that inner redemption which the understanding of God's revelation gives us in our troubles; he meant rather just this experience of struggling faith.[1] God becomes sweet to him; that means that the Christian trusting in Him has no more fear, and so knows that he has been delivered by Him from all his trouble.[2] In the same way, then, must we expound the expression "the sweetness of Jesus," whenever the Reformer uses it; he means by it joy in Christ *the Redeemer*. At the foundation of all this lies the experience that our recognition of what His actual appearance in history means to us makes us new men. Luther can never have meant by that expression any soft communion of mere imagination with the "most beauteous of the children of men."

If we seek God or Christ in pictures of the mere imagination, then we deliberately withdraw ourselves from that reality in which God desires to meet us. Such flight from the Living God was no worship of God in Luther's opinion. It is a mistake to suppose that Luther sought to have such a personal relationship to the exalted Christ. So far as we know, there is no single sentence where Luther says anything of the sort. On the contrary, there are countless passages in which Luther discusses the lordship of the exalted Christ within His own people as something removed far above the sphere of mere emotion, and where he describes it as a topic of reflective thought

(1) Cf. Erlangen Edition, xiv., 77 f.

(2) Cf., xiv., 85; also xv., 107.

concerning faith.[1] Of course it may be said that surely a man's inner life belongs as much as anything else to the reality by which he is affected, and that it is, indeed, the most important element in that reality; that consequently we may regard a meeting of the soul with God which takes place entirely within the inner life as the most important experience of a pious soul. But our inner life consists in working out and realising the value of our relationships to the actual world, and, above all, of our relationships to other men and to that historical course of events to which our own existence is due. Our consciousness comes into exercise and becomes real in any case only as a power which orders the various circumstances around itself. The like is the case with the life of a personal spirit; it depends for its very existence upon the possession of the idea that there exist things of unconditioned value in this world; and so this inner spiritual life can become real only when it has spiritual sovereignity over all possible kinds of worldly situations. It is in that kind of life that we must find God; and Christians find Him first of all in the appearance of Christ, and then in all events which help to build up our inner life. The man who seeks for an inner life of some other sort, goes away out from reality into the realm of imagination. This may be permissible to other devout persons, but to the Christian it is forbidden. For him the power which decides his fate is and acts in the real world. The unbeliever, indeed, may talk as though our historical relation to Christ were of little worth, but the believer sees therein the Almighty arms with which God lifts him to His heart. If there

(1) To give a small selection, we draw the reader's attention to a few of Luther's discussions on the following subjects:—Seeking Christ: Erlangen Edition, xlviii., 316, 321; x., 189. Receiving Christ: vii., 156f., xii.,73f.; xv., 155; xvi., 432. Putting on Christ: vii., 39-42, 316; l., 136. Having Christ: xvi., 494; x., 256; xiv., 335. Christ's life in us: viii., 39; xi., 5; xvi., 435. Christ's dwelling in the heart: ix., 272 ff.; xii., 162, 288, 313; xlix., 313. Christ's rule within us: xvi, 470; viii., 193: x., 12; xii., 179, 203; xv., 25-32, 188, 230: xxii, 66; xviii., 39; xi., 80; xii., 47; xvi., 318. A feast with Christ and Christ's bride: x., 145: xi., 204 ff., 231; xiv., 257; xv., 135 f., 155, 374, 490, 494, 543 f., 554. Fellowship with Christ: x., 256; li., 361, 474.

In these discussions it is clear enough that Luther was very far from thinking of what men now-a-days say they prize as a personal relationship with Christ. And Luther recognises the presence of the Christian brotherhood only "where there are such people as hold it for truth that Christ is so near to us that he talks and deals with us through the word and the sacraments without my seeing it, and yet while I see clearly the manner of life that is learned there" (Erlangen Edition, xx., 1, 510). But such "holding as true" follows for Luther from the significance which the historical appearance grasped in faith, had gained for him. None of the expressions which Luther uses to show how near Christ is to His own, mean that the Christian perceives His nearness as he perceives that of a man who is present to his senses. They are not expressions used to describe an experience coming to us with sensuous evidence; but they express rather a thought which arises as we reflect accurately concerning faith; and the particular thought here concerned arises from the experience we have as we come into relation with the Christ of history.

be any Protestant Christian who is inclined to seek the joys of so-called contemplative love to Christ, even he will hardly deny, on a little reflection, that he has an incomparably higher experience when he sees God coming to save us in the historical event of Christ's life in the real world, than when he cherishes nothing more than an indefinite sense of God's nearness, or has his emotion roused by a picture of Christ which his own imagination has created. The life-creating power which we need daily does not come from a picture in our imagination, but forces itself upon us from the real world in which God has placed us, and which we are to understand and take to heart.

Sensuous contemplation of Christ insufficient, again in view of the future, and as a theory of Christ's redemption.

§17. We find, then, that such sensuous contemplation turns its back on the real Christ. But (2) secondly, that contemplative love to Christ which is supposed to gaze on Him as something sensuously present *now*, takes away from the Christian hope of a future perfection. The Christian lives by faith and not by sight. He may have a strong desire to depart and be with Christ; hence he is aware that Christ is not visibly present to him now. The picture which we are able to make of Christ now, exhibits only faint traces of that glory which we shall some time see in Him. Therefore we will not cling to that picture, but hold fast by the power which the Christ of history has to set free our souls, and to make us aware of God. That work of Christ upon us fills with the longing to come some day nearer to Him. If any assert that they have already this sort of communion with Christ, and that they cling with all their love to a Christ whom they can already see as with bodily vision, then we cannot but have the impression that these good people are injuring their Christian hope for the future. What the Christian can see at present points always to something away beyond itself. The Christian's life of faith does not culminate in a sensuous vision, but in thoughts which point to a future of immeasurable glory.

(3.) Thirdly, this contemplative love to Christ refuses to find in Him that very blessing by which alone He becomes our

Redeemer, viz., the way to the Father. It is true that all who fasten such "contemplative" affection upon such a picture which they have made of Christ, may also at the same time preserve a proper attitude towards Christ Himself. But as far as the production of that contemplative love is concerned, it is not Christ whom they allow to lead and redeem them. That sort of love to Christ has nothing to do with what He Himself desires to work in us. Instead of being lifted up by Christ to the God who at once humbles us and makes us free by reliance on His love, we remain clinging, with feelings tender enough, but merely natural and easy, to something which was given us only as a stepping-stone to lead us forward. We may deck our picture of Jesus with the predicate of deity, but that makes little matter; for whenever we seek in Him something other than that Almighty Will and Love which actually makes us free, then we cling to the human in Jesus and do not come to God. "Although Christ Himself is truly God, and is enough for the man who relies on Him, *yet He always leads us to the Father;* so that no one may *remain clinging to the humanity*, as the disciples did before His passion, or be unmindful of the deity above the humanity. For we must let Christ in His humanity be to us a way, a sign, a work of God, through which we come to God."[1]

(1) Erlangen Edition, vii., 73.

CHAPTER IV.

OF CHRIST'S ETERNAL LIFE.

How do we come to this conception?

§1. Do we not then believe that Christ lives and rules? And if we do believe this in real earnest, must we not then suppose that we can commune with Him? And if we may have this communion, who would forbid a Christian aspiring to attain the same? Good; but if we are to discuss this simple and yet most pressing question, we must first of all be careful that we be loyal and that we do not go aside from the way which faith makes out for us. We must not be troubled by hearing it often said in the church and by Christians whom we cordially esteem, that the most important thing is that every man come into personal relationship with the living Saviour and so commune with Him. If we were to follow such teachers implicitly, we should be the slaves of men. We have rather to ask how it is that our own faith comes to conceive of Jesus Christ as living and present with us.

Our faith combines the certainty that God touches us in the Christ of history with inward surrender to the God who thus reveals Himself to us. The rise of this faith implies, then, that God is communing with us, and we with Him. But God is present to us only for this reason, that we see in Him the Father of Jesus Christ. As soon as we try to find our way in the world without Christ, we have no clear conception of God's nature and become uncertain of His reality. Only when we are in the grasp of Christ are we powerfully impressed with the sense that God is working upon us. Of course we may be aware, even apart from Christ, that we are dependent upon an infinite power; but without Christ we should not be lifted to the certainty that within this force dominating all things there dwells the will of God. And He is a God who makes man's

feeble craving for the riches of personal life strong and satisfied. We reach that certainty only when we discover the inner life of Jesus and find therein that power which inwardly overwhelms us, making us despair of all our old gods, but making us trust Him instead. We find ourselves in the presence of God, because we cannot think of the personal life of Jesus as something that could ever be given over to annihilation. God is to us the Will which lives in and moves all that is real; and that Will shields the person of Jesus and His hopes of life with a Father's love. But now, if the true work of God be to bring the Person of Jesus to perfection, then the same faith which sees that God is present, must also grasp the thought that Jesus lives now, perfected and freed from all earthly limits. He is now in perfection all that He desired to be, namely, our Redeemer by the power of His personal life over ours. On this thought rests the Christian's belief that he sees the hand of Christ in everything which Christ's personal power causes him to experience; and hence also springs his conviction that the exalted Lord knows how near we have come to Him, or how far we are from Him.

But Christ, even as the exalted Lord, still remains our Mediator. Hence the thought that Christ lives and rules now is based indeed on our faith, but it must be controlled and regulated by consideration of those means by which we are led to God. If any man does not so use the thought of Christ's presence, then it is certainly not a thought born of his own faith, but something that has been borrowed from others and that he is using improperly. But if, on the contrary, this idea is simply the legitimate outcome and completion of our faith in God as the Father of Jesus Christ, then our confidence grows all the stronger in the power of that which came into history with the life of Jesus. That saving power stands in continual conflict with all that tends to injure or oppress our personal life. And even when, at times, we see no victories or no results from this conflict, we are able to endure because we remember that the Lord, who has overcome, is still with us with all His human sympathies. When once the thought has taken root in

us that He makes our affairs His own, and that we belong to Him, as the members of the body to the head, then that thought opens up in us a channel for all the true power of redemption; it suffers the personal life of Jesus to have free course in us. Nevertheless all is subordinate to the great end, namely, that we come to God; in whose presence we receive power to overcome the world and to have life that is truly eternal. We desire to commune with God; the way to that communion is to hold to the Christ of history and live in the confidence that the Exalted one is with us.

Communion with God is possible; but not with the Exalted Christ.

§2. A second consideration, however, must be added. We cannot speak of a communion with the exalted Christ. Nor do we find such communion spoken of in the New Testament, apart from the visions therein recorded. We can commune with God because He touches us and reveals Himself to us in definite facts whose contents have the power of creating faith in us. God is revealed to us; the risen Christ is hidden from us. We do think of Him, indeed, as taking part in our battles and victories with all His human sympathy and power, but this is strictly only a thought or doctrine arising from and expressing faith in our redemption. There is no actual fact known to us which could produce this faith by its undoubted reality and its power to convince even one who had as yet no faith. It is not right or wise to say that the resurrection of Jesus is such a fact for us who live to-day. It comes to us altogether from the report of others. It is just as useless to appeal to the power which the spirit of Christ exercises in history. For the purpose of our present discussion that is a poor staff on which to lean. For what we observe in the great process of the world's working, or at the death-bed of a Christian, are things which do indeed quicken a believer, but certainly they have not power to disclose the exalted Christ to a man. Those who see in these things utterances of the exalted Christ, must be already in possession of the faith itself, which then gives birth to the idea that Christ lives and rules. Thus we can grasp the

thought that the exalted Christ is working upon us only when our faith is already fully matured. Quite otherwise do we think of God Himself, the God who reveals Himself through the Christ of history. For the personal life of Jesus can be grasped as a real fact in history by a man who has no faith, or even when the power of faith has been extinguished in such a man. And it is because the invisible God uses this fact to make even such men certain of Himself, that we can say, He communes with us. In this act of self-revelation He reaches down into the realm of our earthly experience. But we cannot say that of the exalted Christ. Hence even the believer must not try to fly beyond those limits which are drawn around him while as yet his faith has to conflict with earthly experiences. He must admit that the risen Christ is still hidden from him. He may, indeed, think of his faith in his redemption in this way, and express it by saying that Christ lives in him; but unless, like Paul, he can appeal to visions, he may not say that he experiences the communion of the exalted Christ with himself.[1] It is right for the believer to say of his ordinary conscious life within the limits of earthly experience: "So far, however, as I still live in the flesh, I live in *faith* in the Son of God." And it is just when we admit these limits to our present experience, that our hopes for the future become so strong that they hold the sovereignty over our hearts in spite of the attractions of all earthly comforts. The personal life of Jesus has then so worked upon us that it has made us see the love of God in all the actual forces around us; and this makes of all that seemed before to be utterly controlling us a means for our eternal life. But if the personal life of Jesus has had this influence upon us, then the thought that He lives and rules in perfect bliss fills us with the longing to see Him some time otherwise than as we see Him in the mirror of history, and with other eyes than we see with to-day, while the spirit still struggles to rise above the earth. This is the meaning of the

(1) No commentator worthy of mention has ever ventured to say that the words "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii., 3), were written by their author concerning a communion with the exalted Lord. These words express the idea born of faith, that the life of the Christian, in consequence of his union with Christ, has its hidden roots in God. and rests all its expectation of future glory on Him.

Christian's hope in the future so far as we can understand it now. If we have felt how it fills us with a sense of freedom to see clearly the divinely marvellous character of the person of Jesus, then the prospect that some time we shall experience His power in unrestrained and immediate personal communion with Him will release us from our bondage to all earthly troubles and pleasures. It makes no difference in this respect, whether the Christian expects the second coming of the Lord as the primitive Christian brotherhood expected it, or whether his hope is, as ours must be, the prospect of being taken up to Him. Every Christian needs, for the sake of his inner life, that his hope in the future shall be rich and clear: in this good hope, which we can understand although it concerns life beyond this life, and which takes a strangely firm grip of our hearts, there lies a power which is indispensable to us while we stray and sorrow here on earth.

What God gives us in Christ is meant to render us so peaceful and glad that we get free from all anxiety about our life, and hence can live in true righteousness: and the fact that our faith assures us of the prospect of future enjoyment of personal fellowship with Jesus, helps us thus to live justly. And when the Christian experiences the elevating influence of this desire for the risen Lord and finds how he is relieved from his burdens, and yet pledged to duty by this confidence in future fellowship with Him, then He understands how Christ has risen for our justification.

The real channel for our relationship to the exalted Christ.

§3. Such then is the relationship with the risen Christ into which we are actually brought by our faith. The relationship comes to us through faith, not through experience. We shall never share in the emancipating power of the thought that we are united with Christ in this way, if we try to get it by deduction of the idea from particular passages of Scripture, and by then deliberately asserting that it is not a mere deduction but an actual objective experience, and that we really feel something which all the time can as yet only be a product of faith. And

yet the prevailing theology of our time seeks to lead us to practice both these evils. The consequence is that most men only get as far as using the phrases of this theory, while their imagination is not strong enough to realise its fancies. Unfortunately, it is certain that there is also another and an appalling result: truthfulness is blunted, and men are learning to forget that the most important matter, and the hardest, is to become certain of communion with the living God. On the other hand, it is also perilous for theologians to try to describe very exactly the exalted life of Christ for the sake of checking mere sensuous sharpness of conception. However tenderly this may be done,[1] it leads us aside from the main point, namely, that we must hold fast and most clearly to that conception of the personal life of Jesus which we have got by study of the Christ of history, for that is the power which redeems us. There is no need for toiling to define how Jesus rules as the exalted one with almighty power; indeed that could only be done by negative statements, for it is beyond our grasp: the all-important point is that the vision of His person shall lift us up to God.

(1) Compare especially A. Schweizer's "Christian Doctrine of Faith" (Christliche Glaubenslehre) ii., 1., 226.

CHAPTER V.

OF FAITH AS BOTH A GIFT AND AN ACT.

Faith is real in activity.

§1. All these forms of piety which we have considered first gain a Christian meaning when they become an exercise of the faith awakened in us by God, through His revelation, by which we are made new men; and it is clear, from every point of view, that we cannot commune with God in what we ourselves initiate, but in receiving and enjoying what God gives to us. Indeed, He draws us to Himself just by giving us the mastery over those things which, without His help, would depress and destroy us. We receive from Him our strength for such sovereignty by coming to understand His revelation, *i.e.*, His turning towards us. Our act of receiving this gift takes place when we consciously turn towards God, and when we understand the tidings He gives us; and then we remain in fellowship with Him by making use of the gift we have received. The receiving is utterly inseparable from the use of what is received. If the divine gift were a power we did not know, which worked upon us with some concealed power of nature, then, in the first place, our reception of it would certainly be no communion with God. We should rather have to distinguish that communion with God in which our own personal will takes its share from this strange process wherein we should thus be supposed to undergo unconsciously something we could not appreciate. And, secondly, the use of such a divine gift would certainly be quite distinct from its reception. But, in reality, since we come into a right state of dependence upon God by our understanding of His act of self-revelation, we can say of this gift that we possess it only when we make use of it. Such an attitude towards God implies that purifying and freeing of the inner life, that new purpose and courage, which Luther calls faith. Such a gift as this faith is a gift indeed, and yet it is

always also the life and activity of the man who receives it. We cannot stand in the inner attitude of God-given faith without setting to work at once to get for ourselves a clear conception as to how the love of God is seeking to bless us by the very condition in which we are situated at the moment. Clearly, in this case, no line can be drawn between our reception of the divine gift and our use of it. Faith, then, is of a truth ours only when it concerns the realities amid which we live, and, of course, as soon as it thus becomes ours, we have evidently already begun to work out the faith, and to reap its fruits. Our communion with God, then, gains in intensity, or, in other words, we become more truly real actors in that faith, according as He makes us rich, and the more we receive from Him; and hence it is evident that if we will apply our faith to all the various relationships of life, and let it establish us more and more firmly in the world, then all the more closely does it bring us into fellowship with God. If our trust in God's Fatherly Providence helps us to find our way through the world, then the fact that we are in the world does not separate us from God, but just brings us into His Presence. If we regard the cares which befall us as the cross He lays upon us, and so bear them patiently, then surely this conduct cannot be called a putting the joy of communion with God away from us, but we are rather led by those very cares into His very Presence, to find Him the source of a peace which passeth all understanding. We are only too apt to imagine that in order to commune with God we must become ghosts, as it were, half withdrawn from the world. But God's way to lead us to Himself rather leads us right into the reality in which for His own ends He has placed us, and in which He desires to make us free and blessed.

The Christian communes with God in right occupations.

§2. If, then, joy in God's gracious gift and the thankful exercise of the freedom it gives us lead us into the presence of God, then the moral activity of the Christian forms part of his communion with God. For the Christian such occupation is not a foreign service, to which God sends him out and away from the Divine

Presence; it is itself actual divine service. It must be made quite clear that such Christian occupations are thus really the worship of God, as Luther was never tired of declaring. We have already seen (pp. 161-166) why the Christian can commune with God only when he desires what is good. He must seek to live in the eternal, or he does not turn sincerely to the God who desires to bring men to eternal life. But we also observed that simply to desire the good cannot of itself be counted communion with God. But if the Christian's active interest in his duties only puts him in the attitude where it is possible for him to find God, this very activity, especially as related to the world, seems to interrupt his communion with God; and so Christian morality seems to be a special sphere of life alongside of Christian piety, but not identical with it. So it comes to this, that in his communion with God the Christian is supposed to experience dependence upon God, while when he faces the duties of his calling he is brought rather to the consciousness of his own freedom. We are warned, however, against such a separation when we bear in mind that even in His Kingdom God desires to be near us as our Father. For so all the Christian's active participation in this Kingdom of God—and this must undoubtedly include all his moral action, whereby he seeks to love his neighbour as himself—all these activities must be regarded as submission to the Fatherly rule of God, *i.e.*, as communion with Him. In all such activity the Christian must feel that the apparent burden of the law is gone, and that the duties are rather a gift from God which makes his heart rejoice. The preaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God results directly in the propositions of the First Epistle of John, namely, that he who has true love stands in conscious communion with God through that very fact, and knows him thus, and thus abides in Him. But we use these testimonies to the unity of Christian life aright only when we seek to understand them in their truth. Now although Luther so often referred to these truths, and came back upon them, yet he never attained such an understanding of them as would have enabled him to make a clear theological statement concerning

them.[1] But he set down many powerful thoughts on the matter, which may put us in the right way of solving the question.

Luther's view of communion with God in our daily callings.

§3. In the treatise "On the freedom of a Christian man," the discussions in part second, concerning the moral activity of the Christian, are far less clear and sure than the magnificent description of the riches of faith in the first part. Indeed at first he even infers the necessity of good works for the Christian from consideration of his earthly imperfection.[2] Still he has much to say on the thought that good works are the fruits of faith;[3] and later on he constantly repeats this. This gives a satisfactory answer to the question as to what significance the moral activity of the Christian has for his faith, or for his communion with God. We must only beware of the remarkable one-sidedness into which Luther fell in his discussion of the thought.

Faith gives the *power* needful for moral conduct.

§4. If perfect moral conduct, or actual desire for what is good, is a fruit of faith, then faith must give men *the power* to submit with joy to the claims of duty. On this point Luther was quite clear. He not only asserts that true love is impossible to the natural man,[4] but he is also able to tell us what separates men from what is morally good. "Now this is the sum of the law, thou shalt be friendly, sweet and kind in heart, words and works; and if one should even take thy life, suffer it nevertheless with goodness, and thank thy Lord."[5] But a man fulfils this law only when he does his work for the sake of the pleasure he has in it.[6] Otherwise his

(1) Luther himself frequently admitted this to be the case. cf., Erlangen Edition, xv., 392, 417ff.; xlix., 327; xiii., 198; xviii., 58ff.

(2) cf., Opp. var. arg. IV., 235:—"Si fides omnia facit, et sola ad justitiam satis est, cur ergo praecepta sunt bona opera? Otiabimur ergo et nihil operabimur fide contenti?" Respondeo: "Vere quidem sic haberet res ista, si penitus et perfecte interni et spirituales essemus, quod non fiet nisi in novissimo die; donec in corpore vivimus, non nisi incipimus et proficimus, quod in futura vita perficietur. Ad hanc partem pertinet, Christianum esse omnium servum et omnibus subjectum." (If faith does all, and alone is sufficient for justification, why then are good works required? Shall we be at ease and do nothing, content with faith? I reply, So should it be indeed, if we were deeply and perfectly spiritual at heart, as we shall not be until the Last Day; while we live in the body, we only begin and carry out that which shall be perfected in the future life. Hence it is our Christian task to-day to be servant of all and subject to all.

(3) Ibidem, 241ff.

(4) cf., Erlangen Edition, xiii., 176; xlvi, 262.

(5) Erlangen Edition, xiii., 177.

(6) Erlangen Edition, x., 94; xii., 285.

heart is not in it. But the law desires to have the heart, and where it is not fulfilled heartily, such fulfilment does not hold good before God.[1] The law is to be fulfilled freely; but freely here means: "without any expectation of obtaining anything thereby."[2] We are to desire only the realisation of the good itself or the manifestation of love. The man who turns good work to his own profit does no good work at all.[3] All this shows clearly that the law demands from man what is impossible. For however sincerely a man may acknowledge that the moral law has a right to unreserved obedience, yet in his secret desires he follows that vital instinct which compels him to take circumstances into account and to estimate the profit and loss of his conduct. And seeing that he is always trying to gain satisfaction for this vital instinct amid the world with all its power over his fears and hopes, he learns to look on love as a duty that he cannot understand, for he is told it is to be shown to his neighbour free and for naught. We see what a man makes of the command to love under such circumstances, when we observe how he endeavours to purchase God's love by fulfilling His commandments. Luther ruthlessly lays bare the moral deadliness of such an endeavour. A fulfilment of the law in this sense is sheer hypocrisy. To use good works as a service rendered to God, and therefore as a foundation for our own blessedness, is to turn our backs on all that is good and to destroy the life of the soul. "Dost thou find in thee some task, whereof thou thinkest thou needest it for the soul's salvation, then tread thou that underfoot. Be glad you do this as if you were treading down all devils, and rest thou not until thou dost get free from all such nature and work. Strive that thy life may be of profit and service, not to thyself but to thy neighbour alone. *Accursed be the man who lives and works for himself;* for Christ Himself would not do His own will, or live to Himself."[4]

But how are we to get free from the power of that natural instinct which compels a man to live for himself? Were there

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 174.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 348.
(3) Erlangen Edition, vii., 176, 295f
(4) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 59.

no such deliverance, then we could indeed see what was morally necessary, but we should find it to be a power which only repelled us. In Luther's view the man who has found and understood Jesus Christ is lifted above such a fate. For the redemption which follows from the understanding of Christ is able also to do away our natural opposition to what is good. The thought that man must be redeemed and restored to pure love by the grace of God was an element, perverted indeed, yet present, in the tradition of the church in which Luther grew up. But up to that time this thought had been developed only in the direction of enquiries as to the relation between renewing grace and the freewill of man. It had not yet been perceived that all such enquiries are necessarily profitless. Even Luther himself did not see this; but he was saved from troubling about such necessarily fruitless questions by the simple fact that his eyes were always open to the real need of earnest men, and he saw clearly what sort of powers could give a man deliverance in such cases. He had no time to discuss the simple question how renewal by grace is *possible* without injury to the freedom of the human will, because he had to show, as he was able to do, how this renovation actually *takes place*. He was the first to describe this, and thus he led the way for Protestant theology to knowledge which it is certainly a harder task to gain than it is to thread the riddles of that old scholastic question just named.

Of the victory over temptations.

§5. We know that the ordinary instinctive way in which men seek the satisfaction of all the needs of life makes it impossible to submit honestly to the demands of duty, and we see also the falsity of the childish idea of the mystics that this instinct should be extirpated; it follows, then, that we can only seek moral deliverance in a true and perfect satisfaction of our craving for life. If we do good only when we do it "without fear of punishment and without seeking regard,"[1] then the man who is to be morally free must have his heart so placed that he shall

(1) Erlangen Edition, x., 96.

neither fear the world [1] nor depend upon it.[2] For so long as we remained in such bondage to the world we should necessarily seek our own advantage. So we become rich and strong if we are to be able to love our neighbours.[3] And it is a quiet and peaceful heart that has the true power to work.[4] Now if a man can learn to rejoice in God and to be satisfied in His grace,[5] then that will be a receiving of just that inner treasure through which he can live freely for others. "Thou must first have heaven and be thyself already richly blessed, ere thou canst do good works."[6] Works that are really good are done "free and for naught, as by hands that are already blessed and possess already for themselves the inheritance of God through faith."[7] Now just such a feeling of perfect inner contentment is possible to the Christian, and he has it in proportion as he understands that God turns to him in Christ. The hour when we enter into such communion with God gives us an inner freedom wherein we desire nothing more than what we already have.[8] Here then the Christian faith proves itself to be the power necessary for moral conduct. Being real communion with God, it brings such a joy in life that we can feel ourselves to be redeemed. For we have in that joy a realm of peace wherein we can take refuge from every disquietude; and wherever we may be we always enter this realm whenever we think of the fact of Christ so that its meaning comes home to our hearts. We comprehend that in this fact the Power which is over all things touches and blesses us; and at this touch there flies away that ban of the world against which the natural man struggles in vain, the necessity, namely, of looking on the world's gifts as the only means to life. This is redemption, that Christ creates within us a living joy, whose brightness beams even from

(1) Erlangen Edition, xvi., 216. (2) cf., Erlangen Edition, viii., 266; xlvii., 24.

(3) cf., Erlangen Edition, xi., 181.

(4) Erlangen Edition. ix., 72f.

(5) Erlangen Edition, vii., 169.

(6) cf., Erlangen Edition, vii., 174.

(7) Erlangen Edition, x., 213.

(8) Erlangen Edition, xv., 42. "If thou knowest how thou hast through Christ a kind and gracious God, who desires to forgive thy sins, and to remember them never more; and if thou knowest how thou art now a child of eternal bliss, a Lord with Christ over heaven and earth; then hast thou nothing more to do, but to go on and serve thy neighbour."

the eye of sorrow, and tells the world of a power it cannot comprehend. And the power that works redemption is the fact that in our world there is a Man whose appearance can at any moment be to us the mighty Word of God, snatching us out of our troubles and making us feel that God desires to have us for His own, and so setting us free from the world and from our own instinctive nature. Then, when we have been made so rich and strong, we may afford to forget all about that "enjoyed love" which likes to recline amid the sweetness of things, and may busy ourselves with that outflowing love that shares its inner wealth with the needy and undeserving.[1] The redemption given in Christian faith can bring a man even so far that "divine love begins to well up and out from within him."[2] The Augsburg Confession (Art. xx., 36) does not say too much when, replying to the objection that the Protestants hinder good works, it says that Protestant teaching shows how we are able to do them; for the command to love cannot be fulfilled without the presence of the truly religious tone in us; in other words, the state of faith is necessary. The elder church used to say that the grace of God renews a man by filling him with divine strength and this is not untrue, but it is too indefinite; it is now replaced by this full expression of the Christian's actual experience: "The divine birth is nothing other than believing."[3]

Faith gives more than the power to be good: it gives the impulse.

§6. Luther is able to show, then, that faith gives us the *power* to will the good, and he shows us how it does so. But with this declaration he has not yet shown us all that is implied in the thought that good works are the fruit of faith; for if this thought be true, then Christian faith must give, *not only the power to will what is good, but also the impulse to do so.* The real interests of faith find satisfaction only in moral activity; otherwise, indeed, good works would not be the fruit in which the proper instincts of faith reach their goal. Now the highest interests of faith are expressed in the words: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is

(1) Erlangen Edition, xviii., 282-6.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xi., 339.
(3) Erlangen Edition, x., 216; vii., 178; xlvii., 375.

none upon earth that I desire beside Thee;" that is, faith seeks simply communion with God. But if it could not be shown that this longing, when rightly understood, impels us to moral effort, then we could not hold to the proposition of Protestantism that faith renews men morally. We could then say at most that the will produces true love of itself when it has been set free by grace (*i.e.*, by God-awakened faith). But evidently that would also be an admission that the moral activity of the Christian actually interrupts his communion with God, just because it does not arise out of faith. But this cannot be true if Jesus was right in saying that God means that His communion with us shall be in a divine kingdom, and that this kingdom with all its various moral inter-relationships is to be regarded as an experience for us of God's rule and touch upon us. So then if we are to understand the communion of the Christian with God thoroughly, we must try to see what impulse towards moral activity our faith gives us, in order to satisfy completely its yearning for fellowship with God.

Luther did not fully discuss the thought that good works are the fruit of faith. He showed *the power, but not the impulse*, which faith gives towards moral action. Of course he is never weary of testifying that faith cannot exist without good works. Faith, he says, is no dream or poem, but life and deed.[1] From the standpoint of faith we may not ask "whether we ought to do good works, for they do themselves without asking."[2] But only rarely does he deem it necessary to point out the actual impulse to moral activity which is inherent in faith. Perhaps this may be accounted for by the fact that the separate elements of the process do not enter fully into our consciousness, so that the whole seems to take place in the simple way which is described, for example, in xviii., 318, "His love kindles ours." When Luther first grasped the new thought that the Christian becomes a new man, not by fighting his way to it himself, but by what he receives from God, namely, by his faith, he may well have thought that the connection between love and Christian

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 86.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xii., 176.

faith was indeed real, yet not exactly inevitable; he may have counted the love to be simply the consequence of the fact that the Christian found himself at once very rich and also placed alongside souls that are very needy.[1] Later on, Luther most frequently regards the joy which the believer has in fulfilling the divine commands as the outcome of gratitude towards God and Christ. This may be interpreted as though faith had no thought of the actual contents of the commands, but only of the fact that they were prescribed of God. But Luther did not hold to this perverted conception. It would have made the good works appear to be really foreign to the Christian nature, and done as a sort of reward for God. But Luther warns us against this very error. We are not to do this or that work in order to repay God for His love, "but simply to believe on Christ, so that we may step out from our forlorn condition."[2] God desires for Himself nothing more than that we trust Him, and take what He gives us.[3] "Thou mayest not do good things for God, but canst only get good things from Him."[4] It is true he also says that thanks are the sacrifice and the only work which we are to do and can do for God.[5] But we thank God rightly only when we use for salvation what He offers us in Christ. Hence it is in the form of such thanks that the Christian's works must be performed. He must find in them a joyous life as a redeemed man, experiencing in it all the power and blessing of God. Then good works will be a real exercise of faith.

This motive overcoming all painful hindrances.

§7. The faith which arises within us as the sinner's incomprehensible trust in the holy power of the All Good One, brings with it necessarily the longing to experience the help of this God, and so to

(1) This defect in the treatise "Of the freedom of a Christian man" has been rightly pointed out by Lommatzsch. (Luther's Teaching, etc., 1879, p. 210ff.). But it is surprising that he derives Luther's conception of the inner freedom which faith creates from what he calls "the practical mysticism of the German nature." (p. 222). This deduction is not justified by the fact that the condition of the man who is filled with God has been called freedom by some mystics. Even Lommatzsch will not deny the difference between the freedom which Luther means and freedom in the mystic sense. That difference is so great that it is true to say with Ritschl that Luther's thought was a real creation of the reformers and not a mere after-result of mysticism. And certainly Lommatzsch ought not to have appealed to the use of the metaphor of bride and bridegroom made by both Luther and the mystics, as if this showed that Luther was merely a successor, a secondary reflection, an epigon of the mystics. How Luther used that metaphor has been shown above. (p. 214).

(2) Erlangen Edition, xlvii., 19.

(3) Erlangen Edition, x., 108; xiii., 205; xviii., 20; xix., 12; li., 362; lii., 307

(4) Erlangen Edition, x., 25. (5) Erlangen Edition, viii., 90.

enjoy the riches He bestows upon us. The life of the Christian is "nothing but an abiding, an awaiting, and a longing for the revelation of that which is within us, and that we may lay hold on what has laid hold on us; as St. Paul says:—"I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended of Christ Jesus;" that is, that I may yet see what riches are laid up for me in the treasury of faith."[1] These words refer, first of all, to the Christian's longing for a revelation of that bliss which he already possesses, yet which he cannot experience fully until after the death of the body. Luther then explains that the Christian who looks so confidently towards future bliss is to experience in this present life also that gracious power which comes to him through his faith. "Our waiting and living on here after baptism is ordained for the chastening of our body, and that we may prove the power of His grace in the fight against the flesh, the world, and the devil." Through the renovation which is in faith, it comes to pass "that a new man, a new species, a new creature comes into being, one that thinks quite differently, loves, lives, speaks and works quite differently from before." In Luther's view the language we use concerning the new birth shows the nature of faith, to wit, "that we at once receive grace fully, and are made blessed;" and such grace can be, and is to be, experienced by the believer. "God's grace is indeed something strong, mighty and busy; it is not something that lies inert in our souls as those dream-preachers pretend, something that slumbers, or is borne about, just as a painted board bears its colours. Nay, not thus; it carries, it leads, it drives, it draws, it travels, it does everything in a man: it does indeed make itself felt and experienced. It is hidden, but its works are not hidden." The believer who has really had this experience will always long for its repetition. The Christian "has no joy higher than this treasure, that he knows Christ." Hence the Christian's spirit is "restless amid the highest rest, that is, in God's grace and peace; so that he cannot be quiet and at leisure."[2] The motive to activity which is inherent in

(1) Erlangen Edition, vii., 174.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xlix., 113.

the Christian's faith consists in his longing to bow at that sanctuary wherein he has experienced the great power of God upon him.

This condition is always a state of suffering. "Therefore also it comes about that those who truly believe must suffer much, and even die, so that grace may manifest its nature and presence."[1] Hence impatience under the cross, or the endeavour to escape the natural claim of the world that we shall suffer in it, are opposed to faith. For our own fancies concerning divine things might indeed bloom amid such comfortable rest as has thus been gained; but the power of the redeeming God and a real communion with Him are to be experienced only by bowing calmly to the inevitable. It is in death that the Word of Life can show its power. "This is the reason why God lays the cross on all believers, that they may taste and try the power of God, which they have grasped through faith."[2]

Exactly the same holds good, and in greater measure, concerning submission to moral necessity. For, on the one hand, while this necessity gives us difficulty and even pain, it lays upon us also a moral task and opportunity, and on the other hand, duty is part of the Christian's cross, which it is good to bear. Faith concerns invisible things, and so also the command to love sets the realm of the invisible before us, and it is from this that our lower nature shrinks. We are bound to exercise self-denial: yet it is not an easily comprehensible thing even for those who have already reached a high moral level. As we solve each moral problem, there is an instant when we certainly see the necessity of what is good, but in which we nevertheless have to admit that we are not at home in it, but that it seems cold and unwelcome to us. Now our faith carries us through this inner trouble. It tells us that the same Great Living Will who is claiming our obedience, and so letting us feel how far we are from Him, becomes comprehensible to us in Jesus Christ as that power over all things which desires to lift us to Himself; and while our faith shows us this fact, it makes us also grasp

(1) Erlangen Edition, vii., 180.

(2) Erlangen Edition, li., 474; cf., xv., 432: "Faith is an almighty thing like the Eternal God Himself; therefore God seeks to prove and try it."

the hand of the redeeming God even in the unwelcome call of duty, and teaches us that He only lets us feel the strangeness and sublimity of what is necessary and eternal in order that we may see how little we understand of the wealth He has still in store for us. Hence the very sternness of duty, which hurts the feelings of the natural man, becomes to the Christian a promise of hidden riches which await him in endless profusion. But when we recognise in each call of duty the God whom Jesus Christ reveals, we experience a joy that makes us morally free, for it identifies the vital instinct in us which longs for bliss with our indelible knowledge of the necessity of the Good. In our struggle with moral problems, that are always greater than we are, we find that we are lifted away beyond ourselves by our contact with God, in the faith He awakens and maintains. Duty seems to kill all the joy of life; but certainty that we are in the grasp of God turns this pain into a promise of life.

Readiness to bear the cross.

§8. In such deaths and resurrections we have communion with God, the Creator of life. Therefore faith, whose only interest is to receive such a gift from God, must desire moral activity. Faith does not seek that cross which consists in painful combinations of earthly relationships, but if the cross be there, faith still patiently pursues its desire to commune with God. On the other hand we are always hemmed in by the inevitable demand that we shall gather what our duty is from the situation of the moment. Just as incessantly does faith insist that we shall wait upon God by every detail of moral conduct. So we may see how good works are really the fruit of faith. Faith loves what is good because it finds God there, and experiences God's redeeming power amid moral conflicts.

We can reply now to the question whether the moral activity of a Christian interrupts his communion with God, that on the contrary that activity itself belongs to that communion since faith finds therein the experience of God's life-giving power, and communion with God is only experienced when we thus receive life at His hands. Of course it goes without saying that

all who are inclined to mysticism will tell us that this inclusion of moral activity in communion with God is simply dry morality; but on a little reflection they will nevertheless admit that if the actual experience of God's touch brings us into a life in the eternal, then we could not possibly have a closer communion with Him. The thankful joy we feel in such experiences is true love to God,[1] and this is the only worship that truly honours Him. He who has this joy keeps perpetual Sabbath and has the peace of God—the peace which abides through all unrest.[2]

Of necessary advance on Luther.

§9. We have now reached a point where we must necessarily carry the description of Christian piety further than Luther went. Our discussion thus far may indeed claim to be in essential accord with Luther, for it is nothing else than a thorough explication of the thought that good works are the fruit of faith. Good works may be described as good only when they satisfy faith's instinctive desire to find God Himself. But the fact cannot be ignored that Luther remains on the lines of Roman Catholic tradition in so far as he usually speaks too indefinitely of the way in which good works proceed from faith. It was indeed a mighty step forward, a mighty turning towards reality, when the Catholic expression that true love is wrought in men by grace was replaced by the new doctrine that love proceeds from faith. For the work of grace in men is just the faith which God awakens in them, and so the new doctrine shows more plainly than the old what is the actual renovation which the Christian experiences.

But now, if we wish to develop further still the way which Luther so well opened, then we must seek to unfold in clearer language those inner processes in which the life of faith expands into moral activity. Luther's imperfect solution of this problem has produced in his church a further development of the hurtful idea that some personal force, supposed to be concealed in faith, gives us the power to will what is good. But it is really the Personal God, touching us in the historical Christ, who gives

(1) cf., Erlangen Edition, xii., 285; xvi., 177, 182f.

(2) cf., Erlangen Edition, viii., 83; vii, 132f.

us the power and impulse to will aright, as soon as we come to know Him.

If this be clear, then it follows that the Christian Church must not try to discover the ground of redemption in doctrines concerning the Person and Work of Christ, but must find that ground in Christ Himself. And then we shall come to understand that our spiritual possessions are the product of Christian faith, and that this actually gives us a new life of inexhaustible richness. This must help Christian theology to the only purification of its tradition which is possible and healthy. The more our thoughts are absorbed by the mighty fact that we commune with God in our faith, the more surely, even if imperceptibly, will those theological figments disappear which prevent us from seeing clearly the God who turns towards us and the faith which receives His gifts. Our inner concentration on the one thing needful will set us free from the morbid craving for such things as the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper,[1] without at the same time arousing in us the equally unhealthy clamour against them. The man who has come to understand the difficulty and seriousness of true faith, that faith by whose breathing man is born into a new life, will be not simply indifferent but even patient towards such

(1) In a sermon which was first printed in 1523, and reprinted in 1532, but which is not given in the summer division of the sermons on the Gospels in the "Kirchenpostille" of 1543 (Erlangen Edition, xi., 197ff), there is an excellent exposition of the conditions on which this idea may have a place in the proper use of the sacrament. Luther says, first of all, it is easy to persuade a man that the body and blood of Christ are in the sacrament; even the devils and non-Christians might believe that. And so if anyone desires to enjoy the wondrous feast, but is led by this idea alone, he had better stay away. "For if thou give the sacrament to such a man, it is much the same thing as if thou wert to stab a sow in the neck." The true use of the sacrament is that we should understand and accept the same as an expression of the forgiveness of sins. In this use of the sacrament the presence of the body and blood of Christ must necessarily be regarded as a means of expressing what God desires to say to the Christian through the sacrament. Hence Luther calls it a "Wahrzeichen," or "sign," which is connected with the word of Christ, and, like the latter, must be understood in the sense it is intended to express, and not simply accepted. It is self-evident that such a use of the sacrament is quite another thing from a symbolical conception of it, *i.e.*, the use of it as a sort of creed. But at the same time it is clear that the conception of the presence of the body and blood of Christ is not necessary. The one thing of importance is that the individual who partakes in the sacrament should be understood as receiving thereby an expression of the forgiveness of his own sins. Such an understanding of the sacrament is necessary; it is of no use to make up one's mind to hold the doctrine that the reception of the sacrament has such a meaning: "for it must be a faith which God makes within thee." Modern Lutherans appear indeed to think that the conception above described, which even the devil and all non-Christians may have, is not of much account after all. For they can hardly fail to see that the Kenotic Christology which most of them favour excludes the conception of a presence of the body and blood of Christ in the elements in the Lord's Supper. (Cf. H. Schultz, "Zur Lehre vom heiligen Abendmahl," 1886, p. 86).

ways of thinking;[1] they certainly do not belong to faith, and they need not disturb it. They are the grass that withers away, and so we may let them bloom as long as men rejoice in them. They do not partake of the nature of the eternal; they do not claim to be certainties, since they stand out of all relation to the exaltation of men to eternal life.

(1) Luther himself says of the doctrines and commandments of the Papacy, that he would willingly leave his opponents undisturbed in them, yea, even support them if they would only leave this one thing free and unhindered, namely, the great truth that it is in the knowledge of Christ that we have eternal life. Erlangen Edition, l., 184f.

CHAPTER VI.

OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER.

It must spring from faith.

§1. And now finally we can define the relation of Christian prayer to Christian faith. If the life of faith is itself communion with God, then "a true faith is nothing other than simple prayer."[1] "Therefore, where we find a Christian, there we find a truly holy mind, and it does nothing else save pray continually. For even if the mouth be not always moving and uttering words, yet the heart goes on beating unceasingly with sighs like these: Ah! dear Father, may thy name be hallowed, may Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done; and whenever there come sorer buffetings and trials and needs, then the sighing and supplication increase, sometimes with loud cries, so that you cannot find a Christian who does not pray; just as you cannot find a living man without a pulse, that never stands still, but beats and beats on continually of itself, although the man may sleep or do anything else, so being all unconscious of this pulse."[2] This inner unceasing prayer is faith itself in the form of a continual turning of the heart towards God, that goes on steadily amid all our work.[3] This faith, which is really a life in God, breaks forth when opportunity offers into spoken prayer, interrupting work with thanks and supplication.[4] But special prayer must always spring from a confidence already existing that a message from God has been received and understood.[5] Without this it is not Christian prayer, and does not come before God at all.[6] "The best thing in prayer is faith."[7] "He who would pray, must

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 52.
(2) Erlangen Edition, xlix., 115.
(3) cf., Erlangen Edition, xvi., 165f; viii., 291; x., 308.
(4) cf., Ritschl, Lehre von der Rechtf, 2nd Edition, iii., 595.
(5) Erlangen Edition. xx., I., 248.
(6) cf., Erlangen Edition, vii., 131; l., 119.
(7) Erlangen Edition, viii., 36.

first believe."[1] The Christian is certainly to say to himself that he is commanded to pray;[2] but he who makes prayer simply a way to reach God, "invents a god for himself, and one that does not hear."[3] Hence the Christian must strive above all "to have his heart free unto prayer."[4] And he does this when he takes God's message to heart and lets its power lay hold of him.[5] In such receiving we do commune with God. It is then alone that we can talk with God, and this is something far above all difficult tasks or hard work,[6] for then the heart is kindled and lit up by the kindness of God.[7] Hence every prayer which is not a meaningless crying out into space is in its inmost essence an act of praise and thanks to the Almighty God, whose love has found its way to us before we have sought Him. And does not the Lord's prayer begin with thanks and praise on this very ground?[8] To be certain that we stand in the light of God's grace because of Christ's attitude towards us, and to bow in faith under this actual proof of God's love,[9] this is prayer in spirit and in truth. Hence true prayer is a work of faith, and only a Christian can offer it.[10] There can be no true worship where Christ is not known thus and unless we come through Him into the relation of children towards God.[11]

And real faith will necessarily cause prayer.

§2. But it is not only true that Christian prayer must be an utterance of faith; it is also true that faith must give birth to prayer. If faith has been awakened in us, then we are not to keep musing over the slender possessions of our own thoughts; rather will the mastery faith gives over each event in life express itself in prayer, whereby

(1) Erlangen Edition, xxiii., 240.
(2) cf., Ritschl, Lehre von der Rechtf., 2nd Edition, i., 351.
(3) Erlangen Edition, xxiii., 18.
(4) cf., Erlangen Edition, xxiii., 222.
(5) Erlangen Edition, i., 110:—"The foundation stone in prayer is confidence in God."
(6) cf., Erlangen Edition, xvi., 163.
(7) cf., Erlangen Edition, vii., 130; xii, 158.
(8) cf., Erlangen Edition, vii., 129; xi., 232, 242; xvi., 185. Ritschl, Lehre von der Rechtf., 2nd Edition, iii., 599. The so-called orthodoxy about us holds, as a rule, a different opinion.
(9) cf., Erlangen Edition, xv., 219f; xvi., 231.
(10) cf., Erlangen Edition, xlix., 113ff, 316.
(11) cf., Erlangen Edition, xlix., 130.

God makes us richer than we were before. As we face and seek to master the particular trouble with which each step in life is burdened, we find that there we always need something more; and the mere fact of what we have already received never helps us out of the inmost need of the moment. If we do so rely upon it, then the contents of our faith become a dead possession and mere doctrine. It is a relapse into the delusion that a man can have life in himself, if we treat the strength and insight we have already gained from the gospel as the means given whereby we may help ourselves. Faith can only continue to be a reception from the infinite fulness of God as it was originally if in every position in life it turns to prayer, and asks for ever fresh solution of its ever new troubles from the God of whose life and presence it is conscious. The declaration of faith within the soul, which says that freedom has been wrung from conflict, is certainly not a simple logical conclusion from something we knew before.[1] That declaration or judgment always arises afresh as a reception of blessing from God, a reception which is of precisely the same nature as the rise of faith at first or in any other case. The Christian who feels a burden at any moment, bows at every such moment of the life of faith under the good, kind hand of God, and this is prayer and nothing else. Of course it is at the same time a fresh understanding of the gospel, because in such prayer we turn to the God who is revealed in Christ. But this God is not the mere contents of a doctrine; He is far more than the mere originator of an event long past. To us He is the Living God whom, by the entrance of the historical Christ into our life, we discover to be now and ever at work here.[2] When we receive comfort from God we are by no means simply drawing the practical inference from some train of thought, but we are turning to a Personal Power, with the confidence that He will strengthen us beyond all our

(1) In the miserable strife of church parties the objection is always brought against Ritschl that he understands by the life of faith nothing more than a series of such logical inferences. It was very right for Ritschl to say nothing in reply to this; for the terrible narrowness which is revealed in such an objection must have reminded him of the well-known adversaries against whom even a superhuman intelligence could have done nothing. But another man may be allowed to ask those opponents whether they do not reflect that such objections would mean that he had openly declared he was not in earnest about his faith.

(2) Erlangen Edition, xlvi., 216:—"In the Lord Christ the Christian finds God at home in his own heart." cf., xx., I, 508.

expectation, and will lead us through the present darkness into a marvellous light. "For God will have it that ye recognise not the doctrine alone and what ye already have to be given by Him, but ye are to seek in Him also what ye still need and lack, and thus to experience that nothing stands in your own power, but everything, both beginning and ending, willing and doing, must be sought in Him and given by Him."[1]

If faith is not to be a mere play with words concerning God, it must pass into the form of prayer, and if prayer is not to be a play of fancy or an unmeaning travail then it must be the application of faith to the definite circumstances of the moment. This must not be overlooked when we urge men to prayer. Luther has reminded us that the promises made to praying ones are made to those who pray in faith, and not as compensation for a prayer that is simply a work done without faith.[2]

Moreover, Luther by no means recommends prayer as the chief means whereby we are to come to God. He knows that it is contrary to the gospel for the clergy to teach that men are to enter heaven by fasting, prayings and such-like works.[3] He thinks that anyone might indeed become a praying man by his own endeavour, but he could not so become a Christian man.[4] Praying is indeed a good work, but although anyone were to pray day and night he would not thereby become a Christian.[5] Life consists not in much praying, but in Christ.[6] It is by understanding Christ that we enter into communion with God.[7]

Of directions for prayer. It is thanksgiving.

§3. Now if our prayer is based on this experience, it will be regulated from its very outset far better than even the most exact rules could regulate it. Such prayer is the result of a confidence in God which He Himself has aroused by the tidings He has given us of Himself;

(1) Erlangen Edition, l., 107f.
(2) cf., Erlangen Edition, l., 124f.
(3) cf., Erlangen Edition, xii., 377; xiv., 8, 172f.
(4) cf., Erlangen Edition, xiv., 335.
(5) cf., Erlangen Edition, xvi., 452.
(6) cf., Erlangen Edition, xv., 156.
(7) cf., Erlangen Edition, li., 359; ix., 232, 263.

and along with this trust, which God has won from us by the manifestation of His love, there comes a thankful joy. Hence the prayer that is thus inspired is first of all thanksgiving, even when it takes the form of a supplication; and since the prayer that springs from faith is of such a character, there will result a combination in living unity of two spiritual affections which no human endeavour could unite, namely, the heart-felt desire to receive special help from God, and the humble (*i.e.*, joyful) submission to God's will. It is fruitless to try to bring about this union by merely saying to a soul that it may indeed ask God for a definite gift, but it must also be always ready to find the gift denied. If we made such an attempt we should either make the prayer utterly heartless, or we should pretend a resignation that was utter hypocrisy. On the other hand, in the prayer of faith this union follows of itself; for faith does not see in God an indefinite power that holds both good and ill fortune in its hand, and which may perhaps be influenced by men's stormy asking. Our faith sets us rather before a God whose help is certain. This alone will moderate all that might be passionate in the prayer that is life's utterance of its healthy desire for blessing. The natural desire of the troubled creature to influence the will of God to its own advantage vanishes in Christian prayer, because we feel that our supplications are laid before a God who loves us more than father or mother can. These two tendencies, the natural desire and the divine gift of confidence, can be clearly distinguished in the real living supplication of a Christian. His prayer is an inward conflict, which should normally bring the Christian up to a higher plane of the inner life: when that is reached we know it at once, because the storm of desire dies away into stillness before God.

Faith certainly does not prevent the Christian altogether from asking for earthly blessings. Such a fancied refinement of prayer would be destruction of all its meaning. Whatever really so burdens the soul as to threaten its peace is to be brought before God in prayer, with the confidence that the Father's love understands even our anxious clinging to earthly things. "Hast thou a want or trouble which presses thee, then call to Him,

and open thy mouth with cheer, as a child will to its father: a father is pleased with all that his child does, so long as it clings to its father."[1] It is this attitude towards the Father who comes to us in Christ that first gives us firmness of soul in view of all the things that would hold us captive. If we try of ourselves to get free from these, and so do not pray about them, we do ourselves a two-fold injury.[2] In the first place we make our prayer dead and insincere; it is in truth really not our own prayer at all, but might be the prayer of a man placed in utterly different conditions; and secondly, we do not really lay ourselves before the God who would be sought of us as our Helper and Saviour; we rather imagine a God who has a kind of love for the human ideal, but has no sympathy for our needs. But if, on the contrary, we turn to God with what really oppresses us, then the confidence which He calls forth within us takes away the burden from our soul. "A Christian knows that he is not refused what he has prayed for, and he finds also in fact that he is helped in all troubles; and if he be not delivered from them so speedily, yet he knows that prayer is pleasing to God, and that it is heard, and that God gives him power to bear his troubles and to overcome them: which is just the same thing as taking his trouble away from him, and making it no longer misfortune or distress, seeing it has been overcome."[3] In this way our prayer becomes a "tranquil prayer;"[4] not by our summoning up all our powers of renunciation, but through the impression within us that God's love is turned towards us, and that we can calmly trust this.

(1) Erlangen Edition, xlix., 313.

(2) Frank, in dealing with this point (System der christlichen Sittlichkeit (System of Christian morals), I., p. 307,) spoke of the Neo-Kantian dualism, which, he said, forbids us "to include in our prayers matters which lie within the realm of the natural law of cause and effect." Greater care in trying to understand Kant, and those who support his theory of knowledge and are so often mentioned by Frank, would show their teaching to be that nothing that can be proved to happen in this world lies outside the domain of the law of cause and effect. So if a theologian who follows this theory of perception were to say, as Frank supposed, that we may not pray for anything to which that law applies, then such a theologian would forbid prayer altogether. But Frank would not have made this accusation. It is difficult to see why Frank was so fond of philosophical questions, and yet was so unwilling to inform himself thoroughly concerning them.

(3) Erlangen Edition, xlix., 316.

(4) Erlangen Edition, xi., 57.

The misuse of prayer.

§4. It would be, however, a shameful misuse of prayer if trifles which have really no significance for our inner life were to be made the topics of our prayers. A prayer offered in such a trafficking fashion, as it were, would either be empty talk, or would keep us entangled by matters which ought to trouble no serious man; such conduct destroys prayer, because amid such gazing upon nothing we forget the soul's real need.

Prayer may be perverted in another direction, if in it there be no turning to God at all, but only a determined concentration on the eager desire to satisfy some definite wish. We sink into such earthliness when we think of the power of God simply as a means whereby trouble may be removed, and which may be set in motion by acts of prayer. In so doing we do not trust the God who is revealed in Christ; we trust our own praying; we do not then pray in Christ's name, but in our own. "Those who pray in their own name, such as those who presume that God must hear them or look upon them, since they pray so many, so great, so devout, so holy prayers—these deserve and obtain only anger and disfavour."[1] The man who only thinks of an "uti Deo," that is, of how to use God, and not of a "frui Deo," that is, of how to enjoy God, knows nothing of the joy which Christ promises to him who prays.[2] We pray aright only when we have joy in God Himself; and such joy in God, kindled in us by His revelation, is love to God; and "true love to God is having the heart disposed and the mouth opened to say: 'Lord God, I am Thy creature, do with me as Thou wilt, it is all the same to me; I am Thine indeed, that I know; and if it were Thy will that I should die this hour, or suffer any great misfortune, I would suffer it with a willing heart; I will never count my life, my honour and my good, and whatever I may have, as higher and

(1) Erlangen Edition, xii., 160. It is easy to understand how a passionate man like Luther might sometimes fall into this kind of prayer himself; but such prayers, as, *e.g.*, those for the deliverance of Melanchthon and Mykonius, surely fall under the condemnation of the words quoted above. It is therefore ingratitude towards the great champion to allow such sins, into which his very fight for the cause of God led him, to continue to have a ruling influence in the church, by praising them as being among the best prayers in the history of the church, as Luthardt does in his otherwise excellent book. Cf., Luthardt, Vorträge über die Moral des Christentums (Lectures on the Morality of Christianity), 2nd Edition, 1873, p. 224.

Erlangen Edition, l., 125.

greater than Thy will."[1] Of course this is the ideal of prayer; and yet even when prayer takes the form of a conflict, if it be actually offered to God, then joy in God necessarily takes the place that would otherwise be filled with passionate desire, and so such desire is moderated. The natural desire that is born of the passion of the creature, and the joy in God and His will which He Himself awakens, must be blended into one Christian prayer. But no advice, however careful, can direct us how to balance the two exactly in any individual instance. God alone solves the problem, by so touching us in His revelation to us that there comes upon us like a sunrise a wondrous pleasure and joy in life, and this causes willing renunciation and patience under what we have to bear.

(1) Erlangen Edition, xiv., 172f; cf., xiv., 8; xvi., 428.

CHAPTER VII.

OF NEW LIFE.

Of the Christian's definite valuation of himself. He is born anew.

§ 1. Such is the picture of communion with God which Luther gives us as the testimony of his inner life, whenever his language is not fettered by any definite polemical task. Even those who have been led to accept some other form of piety will hardly deny that whoever stands towards God as Luther stood, realises Jesus Christ as the Mediator and Reconciler, and yet communes at the same time with God Himself.

When the Christian has become conscious that his faith is true communion with God, he will sum up all that has come to him through God's revelation in one definite valuation of himself. He knows that he has been transplanted into a new existence which he calls a miracle from God. Empty and weak as his life has been hitherto, he observes now and for the first time the point where he has learned to understand the love of the Father amid all the real powers about him. The New Testament gives a very accurate expression for this; it says the believer is a new creation of God; he has been born again. And everywhere, even outside the Christian brotherhood, all really pious men know that the full certainty of God, or the consciousness of communion with Him, is not a product of human strivings, but that it is a work of the Almighty that lets men see something utterly new. We see men who are not Christians feeling this majesty of God's revelation, and we can know ourselves at one with them in that feeling. But the Christian knows more; the thought must arise in his mind that he Himself has been born again. God reveals Himself to us, and by that act makes of the creature a new being. With the rise of faith in the Christian's heart a new life begins which brings with it a thorough change of purpose and a life in the strength of God in place of former impotence.

Hence Luther very often pointed out how the new birth is the new purpose and courage given by the faith which is based on the fact of the appearance of Jesus.[1] He finds a hint of the new birth in the words of John, that our faith is the victory that has overcome the world.[2] To be born again is the same thing as to come through Christ to the Father;[3] faith brings the new birth along with it,[4] for the divine birth is nothing else than faith itself.[5] Accordingly he sees the means whereby the new birth is brought about in the Word, namely in that message of God which awakens faith.[6] And baptism is regarded as "an accompanying sign," or another expression, of what God tells us through the Word.[7]

We do not *experience* new birth; we are born again.

§2. Nevertheless we may not say that the Christian can point to anything in his new inner life as the phenomenon in the realm of his experience which attests his new birth. It would be a monstrous thought for a Christian that he should hold himself born again on the ground of what he can now do and of what he is conscious of being. His opinion that he lives as a new man by the strength of God is based, not on the experience that he himself accomplishes anything that is divine, but on the fact that God is his refuge. Nor was it by any means Luther's view that he had had an actual experience of the new birth and so knew himself to be born again because of what he actually was, or that he could fully explain how the new birth comes about. It is true that he sees the traces of the new birth in the power of his faith; but nevertheless the new life that he observes in himself would be to him no basis for the certainty that he had been born again. On the contrary, his faith gained that power to overcome the world of which he was conscious,

(1) cf., Erlangen Edition, v., 246; vii., 178; viii., 224; xv., 341ff, 362; xviii, 206, xxiii., 247.
(2) cf.. Erlangen Edition, viii., 226.
(3) Erlangen Edition, li., 334f.; xxii., 17.
(4) cf., Erlangen Edition, viii., 284; x., 143.
(5) cf., Erlangen Edition, x., 216; xx., II., 43; xlvi., 270.
(6) cf., Erlangen Edition, viii., 284, 291.
(7) cf., Erlangen Edition, xii., 439; xlvi., 296; xi., 72; xx., I., 27; xx., II., 47; xxi, 269; xxiv., 65; xlvii., 207.

not from aught within him, but through his inferring from facts which he distinguishes from himself and his own life, the conclusion that the almighty impulses of God's love were working in him. Hence he says concerning the new birth: "This birth is neither seen nor grasped; we only believe in it."[1] The Christian by no means sees in what he at present experiences a full expression of what he has become through the grace of God. He knows rather that his deepest life is still hidden even from himself.[2] "Wherefore it is also called a life hidden from the world and from Christians themselves, so far as outward beholding and feeling can go; but yet it is a life that is certainly there and well protected."[3] Thus the life that springs from God, or the life of the man that has been born again, is not a thing that we can behold and study in any of the present experiences of our faith; we gain for ourselves the certainty that that very experience is at bottom a divine life, by what we may call a conclusion springing from faith.

Indeed this could not possibly be otherwise. If the Christian could look upon his new birth from God as he looks on the spiritual riches now in his possession, then he might be called a fruit fallen from the tree of life, but not a branch of Christ the Vine. He might then seek within himself for the ground of his own salvation. But a Christian cannot give ear to any such fancy. "If thou wilt behold, then I will give thee even the life of St. Peter, St. Paul, or St. John; and yet with all that thou shalt come to nothing. Wilt thou be holy in God's sight? Then set not store on thy having life, else thou art lost; for all must come from pure gift, mercy and grace, and not from a life or work in thee. If it be in thee, then forsooth has it happened for *thy* sake." "As long as thou remainest in thyself, thou art not devout. This means that our life is hidden up high, and far above our feelings, heart, eyes and sense."[4] At every moment Christ alone is the ground of our confidence.

(1) Erlangen Edition, xlvi., 276.

(2) cf., Krit. Gesamtansgabe (Critical Complete Edition), I., 486:—"Abscondit enim Deus omnem vitam sanctorum ita profunde, ut ipsi eam scire von possunt." (For God hides all the life of the saints so deeply, that they themselves cannot know it).

(3) Erlangen Edition, viii, 220; cf., xi., 251.

(4) Erlangen Edition, xvii, 353.

"If I am not free from care and fear, yet He is free from all care, and without fear; let me then soar away from myself into Him, and boast that I am devout in Christ and through Christ."[1]

We gain assurance that we are born again only by a judgment springing from faith which is based on Christ. When a man puts clearly before himself what Christ means to him, to wit, that God turns towards him and fills him with a new mind for life, then at the same moment he makes it plain to himself that he has become a new creature, full of strength that flows from the one great fact that God has revealed Himself to us in the flesh. Luther correctly regards this as the true meaning of Colossians, iii., 3. In that passage Paul wished to comfort those Christians that "felt little life and joy" in themselves, "as they gladly would have felt there; they felt rather death and terror." He desires to show them "where they are to seek their life and grasp it with certainty." He means to say "An eternal glory which cannot pass away has actually been given to you. But ye are not to gain this and find such life in yourselves and through your own feeling, but in Christ and through faith. And thus Christ is called your life, which is not yet revealed but which is certain in Him, and so assured to you that no one can take it from you; and thus through faith in His life you must be preserved and shall have the victory."[2] How absurd then to suppose that the new birth can be experienced as a process in time. Those who cherish this conception think they are very strong Christians, while in reality they are lacking in that certainty of the new birth which is given us in Christ.

Mistaken ideas concerning the act and article of New Birth.

§3. Just as clearly is a theology perverted which makes regeneration a process that can be traced by human enquiry. Those circumstantial investigations as to the way in which a man of God comes into being which Frank published must be fruitless, and they betray a striking want of clearness concerning the tasks that

(1) Erlangen Edition, xv., 416f.

(2) Erlangen Edition, viii., 221; cf., xv., 157:—"It is not something disclosed in us, but in the Word alone, that through Him and in Him we must receive and hold life."

are possible to science; yet this is not their worst fault. Their most injurious feature is rather the fact that by such an undertaking the true character of the idea of regeneration is concealed: for *it is a thought arising from faith*, and applies to something that lies beyond all experience. Frank works out the old scholastic problem. How can a man be renewed by God "without injury to his human freedom?" and he reaches only the same result which had already been reached by the schoolmen. He treats the freedom of man and the renewing grace of God as opposites which must be ground down till they seem to fit one another. But in reality neither the idea of freedom nor that of regeneration permits of such treatment. For a man to have his conscience in agreement with the law of God is for that man to be conscious of his freedom, and this thought allows of no limitation. And this is not a description of something that we can experience as real, but it is a statement of the fact that the divine secret of our nature lies beyond all experience now possible to us. Just as little can we take away any element from the idea of a new creation by God so as to make it fit into the idea of human freedom. So far as we undertake to do so we are on the way to semi-pelagianism. Men are very ready to assert the miracle of faith, and at the same time to set aside what they cannot understand in it. Surely we ought by this time to have had enough of this old and ingenious practice. Its supporters are very willing to acknowledge all possible miracles, of which faith can never become certain, or which have not the least significance for the inner attitude of the man towards God, as, for example, that of the magical working of the sacraments: but on the main point, where the only question is of man's submission to the God who reveals Himself to him, they try to avoid the very facts which their faith knows to be such. The man who has come to God through Christ finds arising in himself the thought that through the new environment into which he has been transplanted, he has become a new creature. This remains to him a miracle which lies beyond all experience, inasmuch as he never consciously exhausts its meaning; but, further, the fact which faith knows to have taken place in the

act of regeneration is not something that can be dissected as we analyse the separate parts of a process. This thought means rather that faith receives all the bliss of life at once, no matter what victories or what defeats it may have to face, if it only holds fast to Christ.

But now, on the other hand, it is possible for us, with Luther, to see the new life of the regenerate man in the workings of his faith, if we will only remember that other fact which Luther emphasised quite as strongly, namely, that the new birth from God is not something to be seen or grasped, but only to be believed in. For the workings of faith have the power of a really new life only when they are pervaded by the conviction that the invincible power of God works in them, and of this we gain ever fresh certainty from the attitude God takes towards us in Christ. Faith receives from its understanding of Christ both the power and the impulse so to regard itself; and the thought thus brought about marks the faith which manifests itself as a new life.

Is this rightly to be called a new birth?

§4. The theology at present common among Protestants regards faith, however, in such a way that we must expect to hear the argument that such regeneration as we have described is a mere thought, a man's dream or poem, but not a real thing. To this objection we could answer in brief that it is always a sign of unbelief to desire some proof of reality for things that we feel God creates in us through Christ other than this their real foundation. But let us compare that conception of regeneration which is certainly considered, within the prevailing orthodoxy, as having the church's sanction, with that conception of New Birth which we have derived from Luther. Undoubtedly it is counted orthodox to-day to believe that something remarkable takes place in a man when he is baptised, and that thereby in some way, as the Formula Concordiæ expresses it, a freed will is made out of one that was in bondage. This process is supposed to be regeneration. Naturally it is impossible to know anything of this from our own experience, and only in the rarest cases do men claim such knowledge.

Hence it is assumed that the process has taken place, on the ground of some texts of Scripture in which it is supposed to be asserted that baptism has some such power. Now what does the Christian gain by such a supposition as that which men call faith in the regenerative power of baptism? Without doubt those who share this kind of faith are able to conceive of this questionable event as something quite clear to the senses; they regard it, as Prof. Luthardt would say, as something "objectively real." But it is of no service for the inner life; for even if we are firmly convinced that this change took place in us some years ago, yet the recollection of that will not at all diminish our present need, our present feeling of the slavery of our will, our discontent and despair where we should enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God. A Christian who stands in such need as this will necessarily hear with indifference the assertion that he received a new life in baptism; in his anxiety for comfort he will say to the preachers of that doctrine: It may be so for aught I know, but that does not help me. Of course it may be replied by way of proof that the doctrine is not without practical fruits, that what took place in that sacrament was a work of God which cannot be destroyed through our sin; it is there and will help us if we will use it. Here an appeal is made to us to trust in the faithfulness of God, who will keep the promises He makes to man through Christ, and so will declare to us the sincerity of His love. Certainly this is the right course to pursue, to comfort ourselves and other Christians; but at the same time it is plain that this is a retreat from the doctrine of the regenerative power of baptism which was borrowed from the schoolmen, and it is an evident turning towards what faith really thinks concerning the new birth. For we come to trust the faithfulness of God because of the tidings He has given us which we understand as such, namely Christ alone in His Word, *i.e.*, in His appearance in history. And it is certainly our only safety in any case to look to Him when we desire to awaken our trust in God's faithfulness. If then we point to baptism as to the work of God that is guaranteed by His faithfulness, are we not dispensing with Christ as the basis of our confidence?

This question certainly arises if we say that a miraculous change of the inner life results from baptism. In such a case men's thoughts cling to an event concerning which nothing more can be said than that it is miraculously effected and that it brings about a miraculous result. It would be foolish to attempt to deny that under the influence of these conceptions an emotion may arise which seems to afford a momentary relief amid trouble; but this is not the comfort of Christ. Christ Himself is supplanted by this conception of a miraculous event, and moreover much of the meaning of the event may be the mere product of men's own imagination. Christ becomes a mere presupposition for the process in which men think the help has been given them; and no one is bound to think much about this presupposition, for of course it has already done all its own little share in providing a redeeming fact for them.

The real service done by baptism.

§5. It is self-evident that a Protestant Christian may not remain in an attitude towards this sacrament which is actually a turning away from the Redeemer Himself. So the only just view of baptism is that it is an expression of the love of God which is turned towards us in Christ. *If we take this view, which of course is only possible when we have a Christian faith in Providence, then Christ, and the God revealed to us in Him, are really brought to us through baptism.* We take our comfort from Christ Himself if we understand baptism as a special promise from the God who touches our inner life in this act. And when we take this position towards Christ and towards the act of baptism which receives us into His brotherhood, then the doctrine that supposes baptism to effect a process of regeneration becomes a story that we can well afford to lay on one side. As Christ emancipates us, bringing us into a right confidence in God, He becomes so great and mighty in our sight that we can say, either in one form or another, that to stand under His protection amounts to being a new creature born of the power of God. The marvellous power of the thought which Christ thus brings about within us is known to every believing Christian; for we have experienced it in the hours when our

faith has been weak, and we have then caught hold on the fact that God's love has made much more of us than we can understand, since we can only estimate in a very slight degree the power that Christ has given us to resist the powers of evil. It is not necessary to explain here how such a faith teaches us to understand that the baptism administered to us by the Christian brotherhood is a gift of God. For such an explanation we may simply refer men to Luther's Greater Catechism.

The thoughts of faith do not come by any sensuous experiences.

§6. The thoughts of faith concerning the source and support of its own life cannot be made fruitful by seeking to get at what they mean by any merely sensuous experience. Men fall into this error naturally if they get these thoughts by learning them by rote from the apostles or from sacred Scripture. On the other hand they become fruitful in us when they arise in us just as they did in the apostles. If faith is awakened in us through the actual power of the real historical revelation, then that thought will lift our thoughts far above the realm of experience that is possible to us. What we thus hold to be real in the strength of faith cannot be made even comprehensible to the man who does not stand in the same faith. It is not possible so to combine it with the results of general philosophy as to build it up into a philosophical scheme of that sort, or to establish it on a metaphysical basis. Hence follows what the ruling theology of our time calls "dualism," and which it abhors greatly, because thereby its own beautiful alliance with science is called in question, the fact being forgotten all the while that only a worldly, grasping church would have anything to gain from such an alliance. Nevertheless, it is just as clear to the believer as it is to those who are acquainted with science, that science has no claim to equal possession of what those thoughts imply. For this class of things no theory of perception avails. In these thoughts the believer breaks down every bridge between his own conviction on the one side, and all on the other side that science can acknowledge to be real, simply because these thoughts have come from a special Revelation of God.

But the thoughts of faith are not thereby rendered unfounded or worthless. Their worth lies herein, that the soul that conceives them is set free from the world and rises to God, reaches away beyond its present life and is at home in another world. We certainly could not find this in our thoughts concerning God's nature, and in all our other thoughts arising from faith, if these could all be shown to belong to our ordinary knowledge of the world, or if they all simply expressed what we now experience. The thoughts springing from faith have their firm assurance in faith itself; they arise from it necessarily, therefore ultimately they rest on the revelation which gives faith its existence and its certainty.

Scientific demand is duly met at the right place.

§7. For this faith itself we are ready to answer to science. It certainly has its root in the fact that Jesus brings us by His appearance to confidence in the reality of a God who wills what is good, and who forgives us our sins. Thus what different powers combine to bring about the certainty of faith! one, the impression made upon us by a historical personage and fact which come to us in time; and the other, the moral law whose eternal truth we learn to know at once when we are aware of that law. Faith arises when a man recognises in the appearance of Jesus that sign of his own existence which gives him the courage to see the very element of life itself for him in that eternal call to duty whose claim he cannot escape. When once we have come to see that religious faith is not a thing altogether concerned with the establishment of eternal truths, but rather with the actual elevation of men out of the life according to the flesh into eternal life, then we no longer think of gaining certainty of faith in any other way.

We regard the theological divisions of the present day calmly and gladly because with our theology, founded as we have described, we stand firmly on the law and the gospel; and because in this way we are equally free from subjection to science and from the lamentable need of chaining science within limits lest any harm may happen to poor faith. Some day this

emancipating knowledge will dawn on others also; meanwhile we rejoice in the thought of the joy which awaits them, when God shall give them the strength to throw aside the monkish cowl of the scholastic theology.

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